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VOLUME XX

JAKOB WASSERMANN

BERNHARD KELLERMANN

MAX HALBE

HUGO VON HOFMANNSTHAL

ARTHUR SCHNITZLER

FRANK WEDEKIND

ERNST HARDT

THE GERMAN CLASSICS

Masterpieces of German Literature

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

Patrons' Edition

IN TWENTY VOLUMES

ILLUSTRATED

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VOLUME XX

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EDITOR'S NOTE

THIS, the last volume of THE GERMAN CLASSICS, was intended to be devoted to the contemporary drama exclusively. But the harvest of the contemporary German Short Story is so rich that an overflow from Volume XIX had to be accommodated in Volume XX. It is hoped that this has not seriously crippled the representative character of the dramatic selections, although the editors are fully aware of the importance of such dramatists as Herbert Eulenberg, Wilhelm Schmidtbonn, or Fritz von Unruh. The principal tendencies, at any rate, of the hopeful and eager activity which distinguishes the German stage of today are brought out in this volume with sufficient clearness, especially in combination with the selections from Schönherr and Hofmannsthal in Volumes XVI and XVII.

The European war, unfortunately, has prevented us from making the selections from contemporary German painting in Volumes XIX and XX as varied and representative as we had hoped.

KUNO FRANCKE.

JAKOB WASSERMANN

CLARISSA MIRABEL (1906)

TRANSLATED BY JULIA FRANKLIN

IN the little town of Rodez, situated on the western side of the Cévennes and washed by the waters of the river Aveyron, there lived a lawyer by the name of Fualdes, a commonplace man, neither good nor bad. Notwithstanding his advanced age, he had only recently retired from affairs, and his finances were in such a bad shape that he was obliged, in the beginning of the year 1817, to dispose of his estate of La Morne. With the proceeds he meant to retire to some quiet spot and live on the interest of his money. One evening—it was the nineteenth of March—he received from the purchaser of the estate, President Seguret, the residue of the purchase-money in bills and securities, and, after locking the papers in his desk, he left the house, having told the housekeeper that he had to go to La Morne once more in order to make some necessary arrangements with the tenant.

He neither reached La Morne nor returned to his home. The following morning a tailor's wife from the village of Aveyron saw his body lying in a shallow of the river, ran to Rodez and fetched some people back with her. The rocky slope was precipitously steep at that point, rising to a height of about forty feet. A great piece of the narrow footpath which led from Rodez to the vineyards had crumbled away, and it was doubtless owing to that circum-

stance that the unfortunate man had been precipitated to the bottom. It had rained very heavily the day before, and the soil on top had, according to the testimony of a number of people who worked in the vineyards, been loose for a long time. It seemed a singular fact that there was a deep gash in the throat of the dead man; but as jagged stones projected all over the rocky surface of the slope, such an injury explained itself. On examination of the steep wall, no traces of blood were found on stone or earth. The rain had washed away everything.

The news of the occurrence spread rapidly, and all through the day two or three hundred people from Rodez —men, women, and children—were standing on both shores staring with a look of fascination and self-induced horror into the depths of the ravine. The question was raised whether it was not a will-o'-the-wisp that had misled the old man. A woman alleged that she had spoken with a shepherd who declared he had heard a cry for help; this, it is true, occurred about midnight, and Fualdes had left his house at eight o'clock. A stout tinker contended that the darkness had not been as dense as all believed; he himself had crossed the fields, on his way from La Valette, at nine o'clock, and the moon was then shining. The inspector of customs took him severely to task, and informed him that a new moon had made its appearance the day before, as one could easily find out by looking in the calendar. The tinker shrugged his shoulders, as if to say that in such conjunctures even the calendar was not to be trusted.

When it grew dusk the people wandered homeward, in pairs and groups, now chatting, now silent, now whispering with an air of mystery. Like dogs that have become suspicious and keep circling about the same spot, they strained with hungry eagerness for a new excitement. They looked searchingly in front of them, heard with sharpened ears every word that was uttered. Some cast suspicious side-glances at each other; those who had money

closed their doors and counted their money over. At night in the taverns the guests told of the great riches that the miserly Fualdes had accumulated; he had, it was said, sold La Morne only because he shrank from compelling the lessee, Grammont, who was his nephew, by legal means to pay two years' arrears of rent.

The spoken word hung halting on the lips, carrying a half-framed thought in its train. It was an accepted fact among the citizens that Fualdes, the liberal Protestant, a former official of the Empire, had been annoyed by threats against his life. The dark fancies spun busily at the web of fear. Those who still believed it was an accident refrained from expressing their reasons; they had to guard against suspicion falling upon themselves. Already a band of confederates was designated, drawn from the Legitimist party, now become inimical, threatening, arrogant. Dark hatred pointed to the Jesuits and their missions as instigators of the mysterious deed. How often had justice halted when the power of the mighty shielded the criminal!

The spring sun of the ensuing day shone upon tense, agitated, eager faces gradually inflamed to fierceness. The Royalists began to fear for their belongings; in order to protect themselves, infected as they, too, were by the general horror which emanated from the unknown, they admitted that a crime had been perpetrated. But how? and where? and through whom?

A cobbler has a better memory, as a rule, and a more active brain, than other people. The shoemaker, Escarboeuf, used to gather his neighbors and trusty comrades about him now and then at the hour of vespers. He remembered exactly what the doctor had said on the discovery of the corpse; he was standing close by and had heard every syllable. "It almost looks as if the man had been murdered;" those were the astonished words of the doctor when he was examining the wound in the throat. "Murdered? what are you saying, man?" interposed one of the

company. "Yes, murdered!" cried the cobbler triumphantly.—"But it is said that there was sand sticking to the wound," remarked a young man shyly.—"O pshaw! sand, sand!" retorted the shoemaker, "What does sand prove anyway?"—"No, sand proves nothing," all of them admitted. And by midday the report in all the houses of the quarter ran: Fualdes had been murdered, he had been butchered. The word gave the inflamed minds a picture, the whispering tongues a hint.

Now, by a strange chance it happened that on that fateful evening the night watchman had deposited in the guardroom a cane with an ivory knob and a gilt ring, which he had found in front of the Bancal dwelling, separated from lawyer Fualdes' house by the Rue de l'Ambrague, a dark cross street. Fualdes' housekeeper, an old deaf woman, asserted positively that the cane was the property of her master; her assertion seemed incontestable. A long time after, it came to light that the cane belonged to a traveling tradesman who had spent the night carousing in the company of some wenches; but at the time, attention was at once turned to the Bancal house, a dilapidated, gloomy building with musty, dirty corners. It had formerly been owned by a butcher, and pigs were still kept in the yard. It was a house of assignation and was visited nightly by soldiers, smugglers, and questionable-looking girls; now and then, too, heavily veiled ladies and aristocratic-looking men slipped in and out. On the ground floor there lived, beside the Bancal couple, a former soldier, Colard, and his sweetheart, the wench Bedos, and the humpbacked Missonier; above them, there dwelt an old Spaniard, by the name of Saavedra, and his wife; he was a political refugee who had sought protection in France.

On the afternoon of the twenty-first of March, the soldier, Colard, was standing at the corner of the Rue de l'Ambrague, playing a monotonous air on his flute, one that he had learned from the shepherds of the Pyrenees.

The shopkeeper, Galtier, came up the road, stood still, made a pretense of listening, but finally interrupted the musician, addressing him severely: "Why do you gad about and pretend to be ignorant, Colard? Don't you know, then, that the murder is said to have been committed in your house?"

Colard, brushing his scrubby moustache from his lips, replied that he and Missonier had been in Rose Feral's tavern, alongside the Bancal house, that night. "Had I heard a noise, sir," he said boastfully, "I should have gone to the rescue, for I have two guns."

"Who else was at Rose Feral's?" pursued the shopkeeper. Colard meditated and mentioned Bach and Bousquier, two notorious smugglers. "The rascals, they had better be on their guard," said the shopkeeper, "and you, Colard, come along with me; poor Fualdes is going to be buried, and it is not fitting to be playing the flute."

Scarcely had they reached the main street, where a great number of people had collected, when they were suddenly joined by Bousquier, who exhibited a strange demeanor, now laughing, now shaking his head, now gazing vacantly before him. Colard cast a shy, sidelong glance at him, and the shopkeeper, who thought of nothing but the murder and saw in all this the manifestations of a bad conscience, observed the man keenly. Those around them, too, became watchful, and it at once struck everybody that if any one had a knowledge of the crime committed in the Bancal house, it was Bousquier. The excited Galtier questioned him bluntly. Bousquier was the worse for liquor, the unusual hubbub intoxicated him still more; he seemed confused, but felt himself, at the same time, a person of importance. At first he assumed an air of unwillingness to speak out, then he related with solemn circumstantiality that he was summoned on the night of the murder by a tobacco-dealer clad in a blue coat; three times had the stranger sent for him, finally he went, was told to carry a heavy bundle, and was paid with a gold piece.

Even while he was speaking, an expression of horror ran across the face of the loquacious fellow; he grew gradually conscious of the significance of his words. The listeners had formed a compact circle around him, and a shrill voice rang out from the crowd: "It was surely the corpse that was wrapped up in that bundle!"

Bousquier looked uneasy. He had to start at the beginning again and again, and the strained glances turned upon him forced him to invent new minor details, such as that the tobacco-dealer suddenly disappeared in an unaccountable manner, and that his face was concealed by a black mask. "Where did you have to carry the body?" asked Galtier, with clenched teeth. Bousquier, horrified, remained silent; then, intimidated by the many threatening glances, he replied in a low tone: "Toward the river."

Two hours later he was arrested and put behind bolts and bars. That same evening he was brought before the police magistrate, Monsieur Jausion, and when the unfortunate man became aware that the matter was growing grave, that his chatter was to be turned into evidence, that every word he spoke was being noted down, and that he would have to answer for them with his freedom, nay, perhaps with his life, he was seized with terror. He denied the story of the tobacco-dealer and the heavy bundle, and when the magistrate grew angry, relapsed into complete silence. On being remanded to his cell he fell into a dull brooding. "Come, wake up, Bousquier," the jailer exhorted him, "you mustn't keep the gentlemen waiting; if you are stubborn, you will have to pass some bad nights."

Bousquier shook his head. The jailer fetched a heavy folio, and as he himself could not read, he called another prisoner, who was made to read aloud a passage of the law, according to which a person who was present by compulsion at the commission of a crime, and voluntarily confessed it, would get off with a year's imprisonment. The jailer held the lantern close to the tanned face of the reader and nodded encouragingly to Bousquier. The latter was

mumbling the Lord's Prayer. Greatly agitated, and groping about for a way out of his plight, he said finally that everything was as he had first related, only the tobacco-dealer had paid him not with a gold-piece but a couple of silver coins. He repeated his confession before the magistrate, who had been summoned despite the lateness of the hour.

The next morning all Rodez knew that Bousquier had confessed that Fualdes had been murdered in the Bancal house, and the body carried at night to the river. Lips that had up to that time been sealed with fear were suddenly opened. Some one, whose name could not be ascertained, declared that he had seen some figures stealing past the house of Constans the merchant; he had also noticed that they halted some steps further on and drew together for consultation, whereupon, divining the horrible deed, he fled. The search for this witness, whose voice died away so quickly amid the other voices, and yet who was the first to trace, as with an invisible hand, a sketch of the nocturnal funeral train, proved vain. Each one's fancy silently carried out the picture further; they saw the body itself on the stretcher; the bier was depicted with distinctness as if it were a concrete token of the mysterious deed; a carpenter even drew it in chalk in bold strokes on the wall of the court-house. A woman who suffered from insomnia stated that she was sitting at the window that night and in spite of the darkness, recognized Bancal as well as the soldier, Colard, who were bearing the two front handles of the bier. Furthermore, she had heard the laborer, Missonier, who closed the procession, cursing. Summoned before the magistrate, she fell into a contradictory mood, which was excused on the score of her readily-comprehended excitement. But the words had been said; what weight should be attached to them depended on the force and peculiarity of the circumstances; the lightly spoken word weighed as heavily in the ears of the chance auditor as if it had been his own guilt, so that he sought to free

himself of the burden and passed it on as if it would burn his tongue should he delay but a moment. Perhaps it was this sleepless woman, perhaps the lips of nameless Rumor herself, that enriched the picture of this murder-caravan with the figure of a tall, broad-shouldered man, armed with a double-barreled gun, who headed the procession. Now the gray web had a central point, and received a sort of illumination and vividness through the probable and penetrable criminality of a single individual. Twelve hours more, and every child knew the exact order of the nocturnal procession: first, the tall, powerful man with the double-barreled gun, then Bancal, Bach and Bousquier, bearing the bier, then the humpbacked Missonier, as rear-guard. At the last houses of the town the road to the river grew narrow and steep; as there was not room enough for two people to walk abreast, Bousquier and Colard had to carry the body alone, and it was Bousquier, not Missonier, who cursed, on that account, cursed so loud that the licentiate, Coulon, was startled from his sleep and called for his servant. On the steep place in front of the vineyards the body of the dead man was unwrapped and thrown into the water, and when that had been done, the tall, powerful man, pointing his gun at his confederates, imposed eternal silence upon them.

By this action the stranger with the double-barreled gun emerged completely from the mist of legend and the position of a merely picturesque accessory; his threatening attitude shed a flood of light upon the past. What had taken place after the murder, then, had outline and life. But had no eye accompanied poor Fualdes on his last walk? Had no one seen him leave his house, without any foreboding, and, whistling merrily perhaps, pass through the dark Rue de l'Ambrague, where the accomplices of the murder doubtless lay in waiting? Yes. The same licentiate whom Bousquier's cursing had roused from his sleep had seen the old man at eight in the evening turn into the narrow street, and shortly after some one follow hastily

behind him; whether a man or a woman, Monsieur Coulon could not remember. Besides, a locksmith's apprentice came forward who had observed, from the mayor's residence, some persons signaling to each other. The mayor's dwelling was situated, it is true, in a different quarter of the town, but that circumstance was considered of little account in so widespun a conspiracy—had they not the testimony of a coachman who had seen two men standing motionless in the Rue des Hebdomadiers? Many of the inhabitants of that street now recalled that they had heard a constant whispering, hemming and hawing, and calling, to which, being in an unsuspicious mood at the time, they naturally paid no special heed. It was an accepted fact that watchers were posted at every corner, nay, even a female sentinel had been observed in the gateway of the Guildhall. The tailor, Brost, asserted that he had heard the whispering or sighing more distinctly than any one else; he had, thereupon, opened his window and seen five or six people enter the Bancal house, among them the tall, powerful man. Some time after, a neighbor had observed a person being dragged over the pavement; believing it was a girl who had drunk too much, he attached no further significance to it. Far more important than such confused rumors did it seem that as late as between nine and ten o'clock, an organ-grinder was still playing in the Rue des Hebdomadiers. The purpose was clear: it was to drown the death-cry of the victim. It soon turned out that there must have been two organ-grinders, one of whom, a cripple, had squatted on the curbstone in front of the Rue de l'Ambrague. To be sure, it had been the annual fair-day in Rodez, and the presence of organ-grinders would, therefore, not have signified anything mysterious, if the lateness of the hour had not exposed them to suspicion. Several persons even mentioned midnight as the time of the playing. A search was instituted for the musicians, and the villages in the vicinity were scoured for them, but they had disappeared as completely as the suspicious tobacco-dealer.

On the same morning when the Bancal house was searched and a policeman found a white cloth with dark spots in the yard, the Bancals, Bach, and the laborer Missonier, were taken into custody and, loaded with chains, were thrown into prison. Staring vacantly before them, the five men sat in the police wagon, which, followed by a crowd of people, chattering, cursing, and clenching their fists, carried them through the streets. The report of the cloth discovered in the yard spread in an instant; that the spots were blood-spots admitted no doubt; that it had been used to gag Fualdes was a matter of course.

Meanwhile Bousquier, all unstrung by his miserable plight, dragged from one hearing to another, alarmed by threats, racked by hunger, enticed by hopes of freedom and illusory promises, had confessed more and more daily. He was driven by the jailer, he was driven by the magistrate; for the latter felt the impatience and fury of the people, and the fables of the press, like the lash of a whip. Bousquier had seemed to be stubborn; but the presentation of his former stories, which now, like creditors, extorted an ever-increasing usurious interest of lies, sufficed to render him tractable. He appeared to be worn out, to be incapable of expressing what he had seen, of describing what he had heard,—Monsieur Jausion assisted him by questions which contained the required answers.

Thus he admitted that he had gone into the Bancal house, and found the Bancals, the soldier Colard, the smuggler Bach, two young women, and a veiled lady in the room. The more persons he mentioned, the more conciliatory grew the countenance of the magistrate, and, as though into the jaws of a hungry beast, he continued unconcernedly throwing him bit after bit. He probably recalled other nights spent in the motley company, and it struck him that the person of the veiled lady would be an addition which might enhance his credit. Monsieur Jausion found, however, that an important figure was lacking, and he asked in a stern tone whether Bousquier had not forgotten somebody.

Bousquier was startled and pondered. "Try your best to remember," urged the magistrate; "what you conceal may turn into a rope for your neck. Speak out, then: was there not a tall, robust man present also?" Bousquier realized that this new person must be included. One shadowy shape after another, wild, fantastic, started up in his distracted brain, and he had to let the puppets play, to satisfy his tormentor. To the question of how the tall, powerful man looked and how he was dressed, he answered: "Like a gentleman."

And now it was his turn to describe, to vivify the scene of action. On the large table in Bancal's room there lay, not the bundle of tobacco for which he had been called, but a corpse. He tried to flee, but the tall, robust man followed him and threatened him with a pistol.

The magistrate shook his head reproachfully. "With a pistol?" he said. "Think well, Bousquier, was it not a gun, perhaps? was it not a double-barreled gun?" "All right," reflected Bousquier, infuriated; "if they are bent upon a gun, it may just as well have been a gun." He nodded as if ashamed, and went on to say that, his life being thus threatened, he was obliged to remain in Bancal's chamber and aid and abet him. The dead man was wrapped in a linen cloth, bound with ropes, and placed upon the stretcher. The stretcher was constructed, in Bousquier's imagination, aided by the turnkey, with the utmost perfection. When he was about to describe the funeral train, however, the tortured man lost consciousness, and when, late in the evening, he was again conducted to the hearing — rarely did the night and the candle-light in the dreary room fail of their spectral effects — he unexpectedly denied everything, cried, screamed, and acted as if completely bereft of his senses. In order to encourage and calm him, Monsieur Jausion resorted to a measure as bold as it was simple; he said that Bach and Colard had likewise made a confession, and it was gratifying that their declarations coincided with those of Bousquier; if he comported him-

self sensibly now, he would soon be allowed to leave the prison.

Bousquier was startled. The longer he reflected, the more profoundly was he impressed by what he had heard. His face blanched and he grew cold all over. It was as if a disordered dream were suddenly turned into a waking reality, or as if a person in a state of semi-intoxication, recounting the fictitious story of some misfortune and becoming more and more enmeshed in a web of falsehoods with every new detail, suddenly learned that everything had actually taken place as he had related. A peculiar depression took possession of him, he had a horror of the solitude of his cell, a dread of sleep.

All Rodez had listened to Bousquier's statements with feverish avidity. Finally the form of the stranger with the double-barreled gun obtained distinctness and tangibility. That he had the air of a gentleman spurred the rage of the people, and the Legitimist party, which was composed in great part of the rich and the aristocracy, began to tremble. It was probably among them that a person was first mentioned whose name ran, first cautiously, then boldly, then accusingly, from mouth to mouth, and over whose head a thunder-cloud, born of a wreath of mist, hung arrested, quivering with lightning. It was well known that Bastide Grammont, the tenant of La Morne, in spite of his relationship to the lawyer Fualdes, lived in a state of animosity, or at least of the oppressive dependence of a debtor, with the old man. Every one knew, or thought he knew, that stormy scenes had often taken place between uncle and nephew. Was not that enough? Moreover, Bastide's domineering temperament and harsh nature, the sudden sale of La Morne, and a well connected chain of little suspicious signs — who still dared to doubt?

The unwearied architect who was at work somewhere there, in the earth below or the air above, took care that the circle of ruin should be complete, and enlisted associates with malicious pleasure in every street, among high and

low. In the forenoon of the nineteenth of March, Fualdes and Grammont were walking up and down the promenade of Rodez. A woman who dealt in second-hand things had heard the young fellow say to the old man: "This evening, then, at eight o'clock." A mason who was shoveling sand for a new building had heard Monsieur Fualdes exclaim: "You will keep your word, then?" Whereupon Grammont replied: "Set your mind at rest, this evening I shall settle my account with you." The music-teacher Lacombe remembered distinctly how Bastide, with a wrathful countenance, had called to the old man: "You drive me to extremity." The idle talk of a chatterbox gained, in the buzz of hearsay, the same importance as well established observations, and what had been said before and after was blended and combined with audacious arbitrariness. Thus, Professor Vignet, one of the heads of the Royalists, alleged that he had gone into a fruit store about seven in the evening, shortly before the murder, and met one of his colleagues there. He related that he had seen Bastide Grammont, who was walking rather rapidly on passing him. He declared that he exclaimed: "Don't you find that Grammont has an uncanny face?" To which the other answered affirmatively and said that one must be on one's guard against him. Witnesses came forward who confirmed this conversation. Witnesses came forward who claimed to have seen Bastide in front of the Bancal house; he had emitted a shrill whistle a number of times and then dodged into the shadow.

Bastide Grammont had lived at La Morne for five years. He was perhaps the only man in the entire district who never concerned himself about politics, and kept aloof from all party activity, and this proud independence exposed him to the ill will, nay, the hatred, of his fellow-citizens. When upon one occasion a demonstration in favor of the Bourbons was to take place in Rodez, and the streets were filled with an excited crowd, he rode with grave coolness on his dapple-gray horse through the inflamed throng and returned the

wild, angry glances directed at him with a supercilious smile.

It was related of him that he had wasted his youth and a considerable fortune in Paris, and had returned home from there sick and tired of mankind. His mode of life pointed to a love of the singular. In former years a learned father from the neighboring Benedictine abbey had often been his guest; it seemed as if the quiet student of human nature took a secret pleasure in the unbridled spirit and the pagan fervor of Nature-worship of the hermit, Bastide; but when he forcibly abducted a seamstress, pretty Charlotte Arlabosse, from Alby, and lived with her in unlawful union, the Benedictine, in obedience to the command of his superiors, was obliged to break off the intercourse. Thenceforth, Bastide renounced all intimate human contact. He had no friend; he wished for none. He secluded himself with disdainful pride; the sight of a new face turned his distant and cold; people in society he treated with insulting indifference. Perhaps it was only from a fear of disappointment that he harshly withstood even the most friendly advances, for there lay at times a vague yearning for love in the depths of his eyes. To grow hard because unfulfilled claims afflict and darken the soul, to retire into solitude because overweening pride shuns to lay bare the glowing heart, to be unjust from a feeling of shame and misunderstood defiance — that was perhaps his lot, and certainly his shortcoming.

For days at a time he would roam about with his dogs in the valleys of the Cévennes. He gathered stones, mushrooms, flowers, caught birds and snakes, hunted, sang, and fished. If something went wrong and his blood was up, he mounted the fieriest horse in his stable and rode over the most dangerous paths across the rocks, to Rieux. In winter, in the early cold hours, he was seen bathing in the river; in sultry summer nights he lay naked and feverish under the open sky. He declared then that he saw the stars dance and the earth tremble. At vintage time he was, with-

out ever drinking, as if intoxicated; he organized festivals with music and torch-light processions, and was the patron of all the love-affairs among the workers in the vineyards. In case of long-continued bad weather he grew pale, languid, and supersensitive, lost sleep and appetite, and was subject to sudden fits of rage which were the dread of his servants; on one such occasion he cut down half a dozen of the grandest trees in the garden, which, as everybody knew, he loved as passionately as if they were his brothers.

That with such an irregular management the income of the estate diminished year by year, astonished no one but himself. He fell into debt, but to speak or think about it caused him the greatest annoyance, and his resource against it was a regular participation in various lotteries, to whose dates of payment he always looked forward with childish impatience.

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When the court, in compliance with the opinion and accusation of the people, which could not be ignored, ordered Bastide's arrest, he already knew the forces at work against him. He was sitting under a huge plane-tree, occupied with some wood-carving, when the constables appeared in the yard. Charlotte Arlabosse rushed up to him and seized his arm, but he shook her off, saying: "Let them have their way, the abscess has been ripe a long time." Stepping forward to meet the gendarmes with satirical pomposity, he cried: "Your servant, gentlemen."

The occupants of La Morne were subjected to a rigorous examination. According to Bastide's own statement, he had ridden to Rodez on the afternoon of the nineteenth of March; at seven in the evening he was already with his sister in the village of Gros; there he remained over night, returned in the morning to La Morne, then upon the news of his uncle's death, he had ridden to Rodez once more and spent about half an hour in Fualdes' house. His sister confirmed his statement that he had passed the night in her house, and added that he had been particularly cheerful

and amiable. The maid, too, who had waited on him and prepared his bed, declared that he had retired at ten o'clock. As to the domestics at La Morne, they babbled of one thing and another. In order to say something and not stand there like simpletons or accomplices, they involved themselves in speeches of significant obscurity; thus one of the servants remarked that if the master's gray mare could but speak he could tell of some hard riding that night. The maids spoke incoherently or shed tears; Charlotte Arlabosse even fled, but was captured in the vineyards and incarcerated in the town prison.

These occurrences were by no means concealed from Bousquier and his associates; nay, insignificant details were emphatically dwelt upon, in order to give them a sense of security and assist their memory. It was the smuggler Bach, in particular — who, with the Bancal couple, could not at first be induced to make a statement — that the police magistrate had in view. He had terrified judges and keepers by his violent paroxysms of rage, and, to punish and subdue him, had been put in chains. Unconscious of it himself, this man suffered from a fierce longing for freedom, for he was the model of a roving vagabond and tramp. One night when he had attempted to strangle himself, Monsieur Jausion acquainted him with the confession of his comrade, Bousquier, and admonished him too to abandon his fruitless stubbornness. Thereupon the demeanor of the man changed at once; he became cheerful and communicative, and, grinning maliciously, said: "All right, if Bousquier knows much, I know still more." And in fact, he did know more. He was a stammerer and took advantage of this defect to gain time for reflection when his imagination halted, and every time he strayed into the regions of the fabulous the keen-witted Monsieur Jausion led him gently back to the path of reality.

This was his story: When he entered the room with Bousquier, lawyer Fualdes was seated at the table, and was made to sign papers. The tall, powerful man, Bastide

Grammont, of course—no doubt it was Grammont; Bach in this relied upon the information of the magistrate and upon glib Rumor—stuck the signed papers in his pocket-book. In the meanwhile Madame Bancal cooked a supper, chicken with vegetables, and veal with rice; an important detail, indicating the cold-bloodedness of the murderers. Shortly before eight o'clock two drummers came in, but the face of the host or of the strange gentleman displeased them; they thought they were in the way and left, whereupon the gate was locked. But there was a knocking several times after that; the preconcerted signal was three rapid knocks with the fist, and one after the other there entered the soldier Colard with his sweetheart, the hump-backed Missonier, an aristocratic looking veiled lady with green feathers in her hat, and a tobacco-dealer in a blue coat. The hat with the green feathers was a special proof of Bach's powers of invention, and stood out with picturesque verisimilitude against the blue-coated tobacconist.

At half past eight Madame Bancal went up to the attic to put her daughter Madeleine to bed, and now Bastide Grammont explained to the old man that he must die. The imploring supplications of the victim resulted only in the powerful Bastide seizing him, and, in spite of his violent resistance, laying him on the table, from which Bancal hastily removed two loaves of bread which some one had brought along. Fualdes begged pitifully that he might be given time to reconcile himself with God, but Bastide Grammont replied gruffly: "Reconcile yourself with the devil."

Here M. Jausion interrupted the relation, and inquired whether a hand-organ had not perchance at that moment commenced to play in front of the house. Bach eagerly confirmed the supposition, and continued his report, which now wrought up the narrator himself to a pitch of excitement and horror: Colard and Bancal held the old man's legs, while the tobacconist and his sweetheart seized his head and arms. A gentleman with a wooden leg and a three-cornered hat held a candle high in the air. There

was something weird about the emergence of this new figure; if it stood for nothing more than a finishing touch to the horror of that night of murder, it fulfilled its aim to perfection. The wooden-legged man uplifting the candle was like an impious spirit from the nether world, and it was not necessary to dwell upon the narrow chin, the sneering mouth, the spectral eye.

With a broad knife Bastide Grammont gave the old man a stab; Fualdes, by a superhuman effort, succeeded in breaking loose; he sprang up and ran, already mortally wounded, through the room; Bastide Grammont, pursuing, seized hold of him, threw him again on the table, the table rocked, one leg broke; now the dying man was placed upon two benches rapidly moved close to each other, and Bastide Grammont thrust the knife into his throat. With the last groan of the old man, Bancal came and his wife caught up the flowing blood in an earthen pot; the part that ran on the floor was scrubbed up by the women. In the pockets of the murdered man a five franc piece and several sous were found. Bastide Grammont threw the money into the apron of the Bancal woman, saying: "Take it! We are not killing him for his money." A key, too, was found; that Bastide kept. Madame Bancal had a hankering for the fine shirt of the dead man, and remarked covetously that it looked like a chorister's shirt; she was diverted from her desire, however, on being presented with an amethyst ring on Fualdes' finger. This ring was taken away the following day by a stranger for a consideration of ten francs.

When Bach's recital with all its circumstantiality and its simulated completeness of strange and illuminating details became known, there lacked but little to hailing the imaginative scamp as a deliverer. Indignation fed belief, and criticism seemed treason. The public, the witnesses, the judges, the authorities, all believed in the deed and all began to join in invention. Bach and Bousquier, who were confronted with each other, quarreled and called each other

liars; one claimed that he had gone into the Bancal house before, the other after, the murder; one declared that he had assisted in the deed, the other that he had only lifted the body, which was wrapped in a sheet and bound with ropes. The half-witted Missonnier designated still another batch of persons whom he had seen in the Bancal house, two notaries from Alby and a cook. In Rose Feral's tavern, where all sorts of shady characters congregated, and old warlike exploits and thieveries were the subjects of discussion, on the night of the murder the talk fell upon the pillaging of a house, the property of a Liberal. This report was designed to heighten the apprehension of the quiet citizens, and that afterward all the conspirators, even well-to-do people, met in Bancal's house gave no cause for astonishment. Everything harmonized in the intricate, devilish plot; in the clothes of the dead Fualdes no money, on his fingers no ring, had been found; Grammont had the bailiff in his house as late as the seventeenth of March, and this circumstance, singled out at an opportune moment from the quagmire of lies, inspired security. Bastide was hopelessly entangled. The prisoners were thrown into a panic by the palpable agitation of the people; each one appeared guilty in the other's eyes, each one was ready to admit anything that was desired concerning the other, in order to exonerate himself; they were ignorant of their fate, they lost all sense of the meaning of words, they were no longer conscious of themselves, their bodies, their souls; they felt themselves encompassed by invisible clasps, and each sought to free himself on his own account, without knowing what he had actually done or failed to do. Every day new arrests were made, no traveler passing through was sure of his freedom, and after a few weeks half of France was seized with the intoxication of rage, a craving for revenge, and fear. Of the figures of the ludicrously-gruesome murder imbroglio, now this, now that one emerged with greater distinctness and reality, and the one that stood out finally as the most important, because her name was

constantly brought forward, was the veiled lady with the green feather in her hat; nay, she gradually became the centre and impelling power of the bloody deed, perhaps only because her origin and existence remained a mystery. Many raised their voices in suspicion against Charlotte Arlabosse, but she was able to establish her innocence by well-nigh unassailable testimony; besides, she appeared too harmless and too much like a victim of Bastide's tyrannical cruelty, to answer to the demoniacal picture of the mysterious unknown.

While Bach and Bousquier, in a rivalry which hastened their own ruin, tempted the authorities to clemency by ever new inventions, and, encouraged by the gossip which filtered through to them by subterranean channels, disturbed further the already troubled waters; while the soldier Colard and the Bancal couple, owing to the rigorous confinement, the harsh treatment of the keepers, and the excruciating hearings, were thrown into paroxysms of insanity, so that they reported things which even Jausion, used as he was to extravagance, had to characterize as the mere phantoms of a dream; while the other prisoners, steering unsteadily between their actual experiences and morbid visions, constantly suspected each other, and retracted today what they had sworn to yesterday, now whined for mercy, now maintained a defiant silence; while the inhabitants of the city, the villages, the whole province, demanded the termination of the long-winded procedure and the punishment of the evil-doers, with a fanaticism whose fire was tended and fed by mysterious agents; while, finally, the court, in the uncontrollably increasing flood of accusations and calumnies, lost its sense of direction, and was gradually becoming a tool in the hands of the populace;—in the meanwhile the boundless forces at work succeeded in poisoning the mind of a child, who appeared as a witness against father and mother, and led the deluded people to believe that God himself had by a miracle loosened the tongue of an infant.

At the outset the eleven-year-old Madeleine Bancal had

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been questioned by the police magistrate; she knew nothing. Subsequently the child came to the tavern, and at once people came forward who had heard from others, who again had heard from third or fourth parties, that the girl had seen the old man laid upon the table and her mother receiving money. Of course it was ascertained by Counselor Pinaud, the only man who retained clarity and judgment in the wild confusion, that Madeleine had taken presents from the managers of the tavern, as well as from other people; but it was too late by that time to discover and extirpate the root of the lie. She was persuaded ever more firmly into a belief of her first statement, and the recital kept expanding the greater the attention paid her, the more her vanity was flattered, until she believed she had really witnessed all that she related, and she experienced a feeling of satisfaction in the sympathy and pity of the grown people. Her mother had taken her to the attic, so she reported, but fearing the cold, she had stealthily crept downstairs and hidden herself in the bed in the alcove. Through a hole in the curtain she could see and hear everything. When the old man was about to be stabbed, the lady with the green feather ran terrified into the room and attempted to escape through the window. Bastide Grammont dragged her forth and wanted to kill her. Bancal and Colard begged him to spare her, and she had to swear an awful oath which pledged her to silence. A little later, Grammont, whose suspicions were not silenced, examined the bed also. Madeleine pretended to be asleep. He felt her twice, and then said to the mother that she must attend to getting rid of the child, which Madame Bancal promised to do for a sum of four hundred francs. The next morning the mother sent the child to the field, where the father had just dug a deep hole. She thought her father meant to throw her in, but he embraced her, weeping, and admonished her to be good.

Even if people had been ready to doubt every other testimony, the report of the child passed as irrefutable, and

no one concerned himself as to how it had been concocted, how the ignorant young thing had been courted, bribed, how she had been intoxicated by fondling, applause, or, it may be, even by fear. She was dragged from her sleep at night, in order to take advantage of her bewilderment; every new fancy was welcomed, the girl thought she was doing something remarkable, and played her part with increasing readiness. In such wise she molded out of nothing things which were calculated to throw a singularly realistic light upon the fevered image of the fateful night; for instance, how the mother had cut bread with the same knife with which the old gentleman had been stabbed, and how Madeleine had refused the bread, because it made her shudder; or how the blood, caught up in the pan, had been given to one of the pigs to drink, and how the animal had become wild in consequence, and had rushed, screaming madly, through the yard.

Bastide Grammont bore hearing after hearing with a cold placidity. His frigidly haughty dignity, his mocking smile, the mute shrug of his shoulders, caused Monsieur Jausion frequent annoyance. But there were times when, carried away by impatience, he interrupted the judge outright, and attacked, boldly and eloquently, the frail yet indestructible structure of the evidence.

"If it was my intention and interest to do away with my uncle, did it require a conspiracy of so many people?" he asked, his face blazing with scorn. "Am I supposed to have such a combination of craft and stupidity as to ally myself with brothel-keepers, harlots, smugglers, old women, and convicted criminals, people who would, as long as I live, remain my masters and blackmailers, even supposing silence to be among their virtues? Can anything more senseless be imagined than to seize a man on an open road and drag him into a house known to be suspicious? Why all this elaborate plot? Did no better occasion offer itself to me? Could I not have enticed the old man to the estate, shot him and buried him in the woods? It is claimed that I forced him to sign

bills, — where are they, these bills? They would be bound to turn up and expose me. You say yourself that the Bancal house is dilapidated, that one can look into Bancal's room from the Spaniards' dwelling through the rotten boards; why, then, did Monsieur Saavedra hear nothing? Aha, he slept! A sound sleep, that. Or is he likewise, in the conspiracy, like my mother, my sister, my sweetheart, my faithful servants? And admitting all, were not the Bancal couple sufficient to help kill a feeble old man and dispose of his body; did I have to fetch half a dozen suspicious fellows, besides, from the taverns? Why did not my uncle cry out? He was gagged; well and good; but the gag was found in the yard. Then he did scream, after all, when the gag was removed, and I had the organ-grinders play. But such organs are noisy and draw people to the windows and into the street. And why butcher the victim, since so many strong men could easily have strangled him? Show me the medical report, Monsieur, does it not speak of a gash rather than a stab? And what twaddle, that about the funeral train, what betraying arrangements in a country where every sign-post has eyes! I am accused of having rushed into my uncle's house the following day and stolen some papers. Where are those papers? My uncle died almost poor. His claim against me was transferred to President Seguret. Why, then, the deed? What do they want with me? Who that has eyes sees my hands stained?"

This language was defiant. It aroused the displeasure of the court and increased the hatred of the multitude, whom it reached in garbled shape. Through fear of the people, no lawyer dared undertake Bastide Grammont's defense. Monsieur Pinaud, who alone had the courage to point out the improbabilities and the fantastic origin of most of the testimony, came near paying with his life for his zeal for truth. One night a mob, including some peasants, marched to his house, smashed his windows, demolished the gate, and set fire to the steps. The terrified man made his escape with difficulty, and fled to Toulouse.

Bastide Grammont clearly recognized that, for the present, it was useless to offer any resistance; he determined, therefore, to transform all his valor into patience and keep his lips closed as if they were doors through which his hopes might take flight. He, the freest of men, had to pass the radiant spring days, the fragrant summer nights, in a damp hole which rendered one's own breath offensive; he, to whom animals spoke, for whom flowers had eyes, the the earth at times a semblance of the glow of love, who walked, strode, roamed, rode, as artists produce enchanting creations—he was condemned by the perverse play of incomprehensible circumstances to a foretaste of the grave and deprived of what he held dearest and most precious. Frequent grew the nights of sullenness when his eyes, brimming over with tears, were dulled at the thought of disgrace; more frequent the days of irrepressible longing, when every grain of sand that crumbled from the moist walls was a reminder of the wondrous being and working of the earth, the meadow, the wood. From the events which had overshadowed his life he turned away his thoughts in disgust, and he scarcely heard the keeper when he appeared one morning and exultingly informed him that the mysterious unknown, who was destined to become the chief witness, the lady with the green feathers, had finally been found; she had come forward of her own accord, and she was the daughter of President Seguret, Clarissa Mirabel.

Bastide Grammont gazed gloomily before him. But from that hour that name hovered about his ears like the fluttering of the wings of inevitable Fate.

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This is what took place: Madame Mirabel confessed that on the night of the murder she had been in the Bancal house. This confession, however, was made under a peculiar stress, and in less time than it took swift Rumor to make it public, she retracted everything. But the word had fallen and bred deed upon deed.

Clarissa Mirabel was the only child of President Seguret.

She was brought up in the country, in the old Château Perrié, which her father had bought at the outbreak of the Revolution. Owing to the political upheavals, and the uncertain condition of things, she did not enjoy the benefit of any regular instruction in her childhood. The profound isolation in which she grew up favored her inclination to romanticism. She idolized her parents; in the agitated period of anarchy, the girl, scarcely fourteen years old, exhibited at her father's side such a spirit of self-sacrifice and such devotion that she aroused the attention of Colonel Mirabel, who, five years later, came and sued for her hand. She did not love him,—she had shortly before entered into a singularly romantic relationship with a shepherd,—yet she married him, because her father bade her. The union was not happy; after three months she separated from her husband; the Colonel went with the army to Spain. At the conclusion of the war he returned, and Clarissa received an intimation of his desire that she should live with him; she refused, however, and declared her refusal, moreover, in writing, incensed that he should have sent strangers to negotiate with her. But she learned that he was wounded, and this caused a revulsion of feeling. In the night, by secret passages, with ceremonious formalities, the Colonel was carried into the château, and Clarissa tended him, in a remote chamber, with faithful care. As long as it remained secret, the new sort of relationship to the man as a lover fascinated her, but her mother discovered everything and believed that nothing stood in the way of a complete reconciliation between the pair. Clarissa succeeded in removing him; in a thicket near the village she had nightly rendezvous with him. Colonel Mirabel, however, grew weary of these singular doings; he obtained a position in Lyons, but died soon after from the consequences of his excesses.

Years passed; her mother, too, died, and Clarissa's grief was so overwhelming that she would spend entire days at the grave, and the influence of her more readily consoled

father alone succeeded in inducing her to reconcile herself to her lonely, empty existence. Left completely to herself, she indulged in the pleasure of indiscriminate reading, and her wishes turned, with hidden passion, toward great experiences. Her peculiar tastes and habits made her a subject of gossip in the little town; she had children and half-grown boys and girls come to the château, and recited poems to them and trained them for acting. Her frank nature created enemies; she said what she thought, offended with no ill intention, caused confusion and gossip in all innocence, exaggerated petty things and overlooked great ones, took pleasure at times in masking, appearing in disguise, and impersonating imaginary characters, and captivated the susceptible by the charm of her speech, the bright versatility of her spirit, the winning heartiness of her manner.

She was now thirty-five years old; but not only because she was so exceedingly slender, small, and dainty, did she seem like a girl of eighteen—her nature, too, was permeated by a rare spirit of youth; and when her eye rested, absorbed and contemplative, upon an object, it had the clearness and dreamy sweetness of the gaze of a child. She was a product of the border: southern vivacity and northern gravity had resulted in a restless mixture; she was fond of musing, and, playful as a young animal, was capable of arousing in men of all sorts desire mingled with shyness.

The flood of reports concerning the death of the lawyer Fualdes left her, at first, unmoved, although her father, by his purchase of the domain of La Morne, seemed directly interested in the happenings, and new accounts were brought to the château daily. The occurrence was too complicated for her, and everything connected with it smelt too much of the unclean. Only when the name of Bastide Grammont was first mentioned did she prick up her ears, follow the affair, and have her father or the servants report to her the supposed course of events, displaying more interest than astonishment.

She knew nothing about Bastide Grammont. Nevertheless, his name, as soon as she heard it, fell like a weight upon her watchful soul. She began to make inquiries about him, ventured upon secret rides to La Morne, and led one or another of his servants to talk about him; nay, once she even succeeded in speaking with Charlotte Arlabosse, who was free again at that time. What she learned aroused a strange, pained astonishment; she had a feeling of having missed an important meeting.

In addition, she suddenly remembered having seen him. It must have been he, if she but half comprehended the confused descriptions of his person. It was a year ago, one early morning in the first days of spring. Seized by the general unrest with which the vernal season stirs the blood and rouses the sleeper sooner than his wont, she had wandered from the château, over the vine-clad hills, into the woody vale of Rolx. And as she strode through the dewy underbrush glistening with sunshine, above her the warbling of birds and the glowing blue of the celestial dome, beneath her the earth breathing like a sentient being, she caught sight of a man of powerful build who was standing erect, bareheaded, with nose in the air, and was enjoying with a preternatural eagerness, with distended gaze, all that lay open for enjoyment — the scents, the sun, the intoxicating dewiness, the splendor of the heavens. He seemed to scent it all, sniffing like a dog or a deer, and while his upturned face bore an expression of unfettered, smiling satisfaction, his arms, hanging by his side, trembled as in a spasm.

She was frightened then; she fled without his perceiving her, without his hearing the sound of her footsteps. Now the picture assumed a different significance. Often when she was alone she would abandon herself to a fancied image of that hour: how she had gone forward to meet the singular being, and by skilfully planned questions beguiled answer upon answer from his stubborn lips, and how, unable to disguise his feelings any longer, he had spontane-

ously opened his heart to her. And one night he came riding on a wild steed, forced his way into the castle, took her and rode away with her so swiftly that it seemed as if the storm was his servant, and lent wings to his steed. When the talk at table or in company turned upon Bastide Grammont and his murderous crime, of which no one stood in doubt, Clarissa never occupied herself with the enormity of the deed, which must forever separate such a man from the fellowship of the good. Enveloped in a voluptuous mist, she was sensible of the influence of his compelling force, of the heroic soul that spoke in his gestures, of the reality of his existence and the possibility of a close approach to the figure which persisted in haunting her troubled dreams. She was frightened at herself; she gazed into the dreaded depths of her soul, and she often felt as if she herself were lying in prison and Bastide were walking back and forth outside, planning means for forcing the door, while his swift steed was neighing in triumph.

Now she was entangled in all the talk, whisperings, and tales, and the whole mass of abominations, too, in which design and arbitrariness were hopelessly mingled, passed, steadily growing, before her. The thing had an increasingly strange effect upon her, and she felt as if she were breathing poisoned air; she would walk through one of the streets of Rodez and fancy that all eyes were fastened upon her in accusation, so that she hastened her steps, hurried home, pale and confused, and gazed at herself in the mirror with faltering pulse.

She had recently been entertained at the estate of a family on terms of friendship with her father. One day the master of the house, a scholar, was thrown into great agitation over the loss of a valuable manuscript. The servants were ordered to ransack every room, but no one was suspected of theft. Clarissa fell by and by into a painful state; she imagined that she was suspected; in every word she felt a sting, in every look a question; she took part in the search with anxious zeal, fevered visions

of prison and disgrace already floated before her, she longed to hasten to her father, to assert her innocence—when suddenly the manuscript was found under some old books; Clarissa breathed again as if saved from peril of death, and never before had she been as witty, talkative, and captivatingly lovable as in the hours that followed.

When in the imagination of the multitude the lady with the green feathers grew steadily more distinct, along with the other figures implicated in the brutal slaughter of poor Fualdes, Clarissa was thrown into a consternation with which she only trifled at first, as if to test herself in a probability or balance herself upon a possibility, like a lad who with a pleasing shudder ventures upon the frozen surface of a stream to test its firmness. She devoured the reports in the newspapers. The timorous dallying grew into a haunting idea, chiefly owing to the fact that she really was the possessor of a hat with green feathers. That circumstance could not be regarded as remarkable. Fashion permitted the use of green, yellow, or red feathers; nevertheless, the possession of the hat became a torment to Clarissa. She dared no longer touch it; it seemed to her as if the feathers were enveloped in a bloody lustre, and she finally hid it in a lumber-room under the roof. She busied herself with plans of travel, and meant to visit Paris; but her resolution grew more shaky every day. Meanwhile June set in. A traveling theatrical company gave a number of performances in Rodez, and an officer by the name of Clemendot, who had long been pursuing Clarissa with declarations of love, but who had always, on account of his commonplaceness and evident crudity, been coolly, nay, at times ignominiously repulsed, brought her a ticket and invited her to accompany him to the theatre. She declined, but at the last moment she felt a desire to go, and had to suffer Captain Clemendot's taking the vacant seat to her right, after the rise of the curtain.

The troupe presented a melodrama, whose action dragged out at great length and with great gusto the misfortune

and gruesome murder of an innocent youth. At the close of the last act a woman disguised as a man appeared upon the scene; she wore a pointed round hat, and a mask covered her face. A hurried love-scene, carried on in whispers, by the light of the dismal lamp of a criminal quarter, with the chief of the band of murderers, sealed the fate of the unhappy victim, who was kneeling in prayer. In the house an eager silence reigned, all eyes were burning. Clarissa seemed to hear the hundred hearts beat like so many hammers; she grew hot and cold, every feeling of the real present vanished, and when, in the ensuing interval, Captain Clemendot in his half humble, half impudent way became importunate, a shudder ran through her body, and at the fumes of wine which he exhaled she came near fainting. Suddenly she threw back her head, fixed her gaze upon his muddled, besotted countenance and asked in a low, sharp, hurried tone: "What would you say, Captain, if it were I — I — who was present at the Bancal house?"

Captain Clemendot turned pale. His mouth opened slowly, his cheeks quivered, his eyes glistened with fear, and when Clarissa broke into a soft, mocking, but not quite natural, laugh, he rose and, with an embarrassed farewell, left her. He was a simple man, as illiterate as a drummer, and, like everybody else in Rodez, completely under the sway of the blood-curdling reports. When the performance was at an end, he approached Clarissa, who, with an impassive air, was making her way to the exit, and asked whether she had been trying to jest with him, and she, her lips dry, and something like a prying hatred in her eyes, answered, laughing again: "No, no, Captain." After that her face resumed its earnest, almost sad, expression and her head dropped on her breast.

Clemendot went home with a disturbed mind, thoroughly convinced that he had received an important confession. He felt in duty bound to speak out, and unbosomed himself next morning to a comrade. The latter drew a second friend into the secret, they deliberated together, and by

noon the magistrate had been informed. Monsieur Jausion had the Captain and Madame Mirabel summoned. After long and singular reflection Clarissa declared that the whole thing was a joke, and the magistrate was obliged to dismiss her for the present.

It was not joking, however, that the gentlemen wanted, but earnest. The Prefect, advised of what had happened, called in the evening on President Seguret and had a brief interview with the worthy man, who, shaken to his inmost soul, had to learn what a disgrace, to himself and her, his daughter had conjured up, menacing thus the peace of his old age. Clarissa was called in; she stood as if deprived of life before the two aged men, and the grief which spoke in her father's every motion and feature struck her heart with sorrow. She pleaded the thoughtlessness of the moment, the mad humor and confusion of her mind; in vain, the Prefect openly showed his incredulity. Monsieur Seguret, who in spite of his fondness for a jovial life, was of an exceedingly suspicious disposition, lacking, too, a firm and clear judgment of men, could not help regarding the depressed spirits of his daughter as a proof of guilt, and he explained to her, with cutting severity, that the truth alone would keep him from thrusting her from his heart. Clarissa ceased speaking; words rushed in upon her like destroying demons. The President grew sleepless and agitated, and wandered, distracted, about the castle all night long. His reflections consisted in fathoming Clarissa's nature on the side of its awful possibilities, and he very soon saw her impenetrable character covered with the blots and stigmas of the vice of romanticism. He, too, was completely under the spell of the general fanatical opinion, his experience could not hold out against the poisoned breath of calumny; the fear of being connected with the monstrous deed was stronger than the voice of his heart; suspicion became certainty, denial a lie. When he reflected upon Clarissa's past, her ungovernable desire to desert the beaten paths — a quality which appeared to him now as the

gate to crime — no assumption was too daring, and her image interwove itself in the dismal web.

Sleep was banished from Clarissa, too. She surprised her father in the gray morning hours in his disturbed wanderings through the rooms, and threw herself sobbing at his feet. He made no attempt to console her or raise her; to her despairing question as to what she could be seeking in the Bancal house, since as a widow she was perfectly free to come and go as she pleased and could dispense with secrecy, the President's reply was a significant shrug; and so firmly was his sinister conjecture imbedded, that upon her dignified demand for a just consideration, he only flung back the retort: "Tell the truth."

The news was not slow to travel. Relatives and friends of the President made their appearance: amazed, excited, eager, malicious. To see the impenetrably peculiar, elusively unapproachable Clarissa cast into the mire was a sight they were all anxious to enjoy. A few of the older ladies attempted a hypocritically gentle persuasion, and Clarissa's contemptuous silence and the pained look of her eyes seemed to imply avowals. The Prefect came once more, accompanied by two officials. For the Government and the local functionaries everything was at stake; the cry for revenge of the citizens, anxious for their safety, the defiance and rancor of the Bonapartists, grew more violent every day, the papers demanded the conviction of the guilty persons, the rural population was on the point of a revolt. A witness who had no share in the deed itself, like Madame Mirabel, could quickly change and terminate everything; persuasion was brought to bear, she was promised, as far as the oath to which she subscribed in the Bancal house was concerned, a written dispensation from Rome, and a Jesuit priest whom the Mayor brought to the château expressly confirmed this. When everything proved vain and Clarissa began to oppose the cruel pressure by a stony calm, she was threatened with imprisonment, with having her disgrace and depravity made public through all France. And

at these words of the Prefect her father fell upon his knees before her, as she had done that morning before him, and conjured her to speak. This was too much; with a shriek, she fell fainting to the floor.

Clarissa believed she remembered having spent the evening of the nineteenth of March with the Pal family, in Rodez; she believed she remembered that Madame Pal herself remarked to her the following day: "We were so merry yesterday, and perhaps at that very time poor Fualdes was being murdered." Upon referring to this, the Pals made a positive denial of everything; they denied that Clarissa had paid them a visit; nay, in their vague, cowardly fright, they even declared that they had been on bad terms with Madame Mirabel for years.

To human pity spirits blinded by fear and delusion were no longer accessible. Even had the sound sense of a single individual attempted resistance, it would have been useless; the giant avalanche could not be stayed. A diabolical plot was concocted, and it was the Prefect, Count d'Estournel, who perfected it in such wise that it promised the best success. Toward one o'clock at night a carriage drove into the castle grounds; Clarissa was compelled to enter it; the President, the Magistrate, the Prefect, were her companions. The carriage stopped in front of the Bancal house. Monsieur Seguret led his daughter into the ground floor room on the left, a cave-like chamber, gloomy as a bad conscience. On the shelf over the stove there stood a miserable little lamp whose light fell on two sheriff's officers and a lawyer's clerk, with stern countenances, leaning against the wall. The windows were hung with rags, the alcoves were pitchy dark, a mute silence reigned throughout the house.

"Do you know this place?" asked the Prefect with solemn deliberation. All turned their gaze upon Clarissa. In order to soften the frightful tension of her breast, she listened to the rain, which was beating against the wall outside; all her senses seemed to have gathered in her ear to that end. Her body grew limp, her tongue refused to

utter more than "no" or "yes," and since the first promised new torment and agony, but the latter perchance peace, she breathed a "yes:" a little word, born of fear and exhaustion, and, scarce alive, winged with a mysterious power. Her mind, confused and consumed with longing, turned a phantom image, the creation of a thousand effervescent brains, into an actual experience. The half consciously heard, half distractedly read, became a burning reality. Her existence seemed strangely entangled in that of the man of the wood and dale, who had fervently lifted his head to heaven, and sniffed in the air with the expression of a thirsting animal. Now she stood upon the bridge which led to his domain; she beheld herself sitting at his feet, drops of blood from his outstretched hand fell upon her bowed head. Consternation on the one hand, and the most radiant hope on the other, seized her heart, while between there flamed like a torch, there rang out exultant like a battle-cry, the name Bastide Grammont, a plaything for her dreams.

An expression of relief flitted over the faces of the men upon this first syllable of a significant confession. President Seguret covered his eyes with his hand. He resolved in his heart to renounce his love for his misguided child. Clarissa felt it; all the ties which had hitherto bound her were broken.

She had, then, been in the room on the evening of the nineteenth of March? she was asked. She nodded. How had she come there? questioned Monsieur Jausion further, and his tone and mien were marked by a certain cautiousness and nicety, as if he feared to disturb the still timorous spirits of memory. Clarissa remained silent. Had she come by way of the Rue des Hebdomadiers? asked the Prefect. Clarissa nodded. "Speak! Speak!" thundered Monsieur Seguret suddenly, and even the two sheriff's officers were startled.

"I met several persons," Clarissa whispered in a tone so low that all involuntarily bent their heads forward.

"I was afraid of them, and I ran, from fear, into the first open house."

Monsieur Jausion winked to the clerk. "Into this house, then?" he asked in a caressing voice, while the clerk seated himself on the bench near the stove and wrote in a crouching position.

Clarissa continued in the same plaintive whisper: "I opened the door of this room. Somebody seized me by the arm and led me into the alcove. He enjoined me to be silent. It was Bastide Grammont."

At last the name! But how different it was to pronounce it than merely to think it! Clarissa paused, while she closed her eyes and clapsed her hands convulsively. "After leaving me alone a while," she resumed as if speaking in her sleep, "he returned, bade me follow him and led me into the street. There he stood still and asked whether I knew him. I first said yes, then no. Thereupon he asked me if I had seen anything, and I said no. 'Go away!' he ordered, and I went. But I had not reached the centre of the town when he was again at my side and took my hand in his. 'I am not one of the murderers,' he protested, 'I met you and my only object was to save you. Swear that you will remain silent, swear on your father's life.' I swore, whereupon he left me. And that is all."

Monsieur Jausion smiled skeptically. "You claim, Madame, to have fled in here from the street," he remarked, "but it has been established by unexceptionable testimony that the gate was locked from eight o'clock on. How do you explain that?"

Clarissa remained mute, even her breath seemed to stop. The Prefect motioned to Monsieur Jausion to desist; for the present enough had been attained, it was enough that Bastide Grammont had been recognized by Clarissa. The resolve to force the criminal, who denied all share in the guilt, to a confession by having him unexpectedly confront the witness, came as a matter of course.

The gentlemen led Clarissa to the carriage, as she was

scarcely able to walk. At home she lapsed into a peculiar state. First she lay back lethargically in a chair; suddenly she sprang up and cried: "Take away the murderers!" The door opened and the terrified face of a servant appeared in the crack. All the domestics stood waiting in the hall, most of them resolved to leave the President's service. Clarissa saw herself deprived of all the protection of love, and cast out from the circle where birth is respected and binding forms are recognized as the least of duties. She was exposed to every eye, the boldest gaze could pry into her inmost soul, she had become a public object, nothing about her was any longer her own, she herself could no longer find herself, find anything in herself upon which she could lean, she was branded, without and within, food for the general prurience, tossed defenselessly upon the filthy floods of gossip, the centre of a fearful occurrence from which she could no more dissever her thoughts. Sadness, grief, anxiety, scorn, these were no longer feelings for her, her blood coursed too wildly for that; uncertainty of herself dominated her, doubts as to her perception, doubts as to visible things in general; and now and then she would prick her finger with a needle just to feel the pain, which would serve as evidence of her being awake and might preserve her heart from decay. Added to this, the torment she suffered from the intrusive: appeals to tell the truth, the jeers from below, the command from above, the thirst for revenge and the ineffaceableness of a word once spoken; lastly, she saw the whole world filled with red tongues, ceaselessly chattering; bloody tongues with snakelike movements, directed toward her; every object she touched turned into a slippery tongue. Human countenances grew dim, save one, which, despite guilt and condemnation, was enthroned, in heroic suffering, high above the others, nay, appeared preëminent through his guilt as well as his defiance. And the day she was told that she was to confront Bastide Grammont in order to accuse him, her pulses beat in joyous measure again for the first time, and she arrayed herself as if for a festival.

The meeting was to take place in the magistrate's office. Besides Monsieur Jausion and his clerks, Counselor Pinaud, who had returned, was present. Monsieur Jausion cast a malicious glance at him over his spectacles as Clarissa Mirabel, decked in lace, rustled in, bowed smiling to the gentlemen, and then swept her gaze with cheerful calmness over the inhospitable room. From a frame in the centre of the wall the fat and ill-humored face of the King looked down upon her, as ill-humored as if each one of his subjects were especially repugnant to him. She forgot that it was only a picture that hung before her and looked up with a coquettish pout.

The magistrate made a sign, a side-door was thrown open, and Bastide Grammont, with hands chained together and with an officer of justice on either side of him, walked in. Clarissa gave a low cry and her face turned livid.

Prison atmosphere enveloped Bastide. The shaggy hair, the long, neglected beard, the staring, somewhat dazed look, the slight stoop, as of a carrier of burdens, of the gigantic form, the secretly quivering wrath upon his newly furrowed brow — all proclaimed their cause and origin. Yes, he seemed to carry about him the invisible walls which filled him with agony and gloom, and which, month after month, pictured to him with more and more hopeless brilliance the images of freedom, until finally they refused to delude him with blooming tree or flourishing field; then they resembled the desolate gray of an autumn evening, when the air already smacks of winter, the hearse rattles oftener than usual past the garden-gate toward the little churchyard, and the rising half-moon floats in glowing radiance in the misty azure like a bleeding, divided heart.

And yet that haughty eye, in which shone the resolve to be true to himself? And yet that strangely bitter scorn in his mien which might be compared to the cautious and at the same time majestic crouching of a tiger cat? The infinite contempt with which he looked at the hands of the clerks, prepared to write, his inner freedom and grand detachment in spite of the handcuffs and the two soldiers?

It was this that wrung the cry from Clarissa's lips, and drove the mad merriment from her face. Not, indeed, because she was forced to behold the former genius of the woods and wilds bound and shattered, but because she recognized as in a flash of lightning that that hand could not have wielded a murderous knife, that such a deed did not touch the circle of his being, even if he may have been capable of the act, and that all was in vain, an incomprehensible intoxication and madness, an impenetrable horror, an exhibition of hypocrisy and disease. A dizziness seized her as if she were falling from a high tower. She was ashamed of her showy dress, its conspicuous finery, and in passionate excitement she tore the costly lace from her arms and, with an expression of the utmost loathing, threw it on the ground.

Monsieur Jausion must have interpreted it differently. Again he smiled at Monsieur Pinaud, but this time in triumph, as if he would say: the sample tallies. "Do you know this lady, Bastide Grammont?" he asked the prisoner. Bastide turned his head aside, and his look of careless, bitter disdain cut Clarissa to the quick. "I don't know her," he replied gloomily, "I have never seen her."

And once more Monsieur Jausion smiled, as if to correct a passing error, and murmured: "That is not possible; Madame Mirabel, dressed at that time as a man, and with a hat with green feathers, was in the Bancal house, and was led by you yourself to the street, where you received her oath. I beg you to call it to mind."

Bastide's face contracted as if at the annoying persistence of a fly, and he repeated in a loud, energetic tone: "I don't know the lady. I have never seen her." And his tightly compressed lips betrayed his firm resolve to remain silent.

Monsieur Jausion adjusted his wig and looked troubled. "What answer have you to that, Madame?" he asked, addressing Clarissa.

"He may not know that I saw him," she said in a whisper, but her voice had the penetrating quality of the chirping of a cricket.

Bastide turned toward her once more, and in the somewhat oblique glance of his wearily brilliant eyes there was a mixture of curiosity and scorn, no more, however, than would be bestowed upon a mushroom or a spider. Inwardly he weighed, as it were, the slender, childlike form, wondered casually at the agitation of her gestures, her flashing eyes, the helpless twitching of her lips, wondered at the lace lying on the floor, and thought he was dreaming when he became aware that an imploring gesture of her hands was meant for him.

The magistrate sprang up and, with distorted face, cried: "Do not jest with us, Madame, it may cost you dear. Speak out, then! A forced oath is not valid! The peace of your fellow-citizens, the peace of the country is at stake. Free yourself from the spell of the wretched being! Your infamous smile, Grammont, will be laid to your account on the day of the sentence."

Counselor Pinaud stepped forward and murmured a few words into the ear of Bastide, who lifted his arms, and with an expression of consuming rage pressed his clenched, chained hands to his eyes. Clarissa staggered to the magistrate's table, and while a deadly pallor overspread her cheeks, she shrieked: "It is all a lie! Lie! Lie!"

Monsieur Jausion measured her from head to foot. "Then I place you in the position of an accused person, Madame, and declare you under arrest."

A gleam of mournful satisfaction flitted over Clarissa's features. Swiftly, with the lightning-like wheeling of a dancer, she turned toward Bastide Grammont, looked at him as one looks up at a stormy sky after a sultry day, and with a pained, long-drawn breath, she called his name in a low voice. He, however, stepped back as if at an impure touch, and never before had Clarissa encountered such a glance and expression of disdain. Her knees shook, a feeling of distress overcame her, her eyes filled with tears. It was only when the door of the prison closed behind her that the helpless sensation of being flogged left

her. Shame and remorse overpowered her; even the mysteriousness of her position afforded her but slight consolation. Controlled by no law, she seemed to have been shoved off the track upon which, in the ordinary course of nature, cause and effect, cumbrously linked together, crawl along in the slow process of experience.

In accordance with her station, she had been assigned the best room in the prison. The first hours she lay on the straw-bed and writhed in agony. When the keeper on her urgent request brought a light, as she feared she would go insane in the darkness, the candle-light fell upon the image of Christ upon the cross with the crown of thorns, which hung upon the gray-tinted wall. She gave a shriek, her overstrained senses found in the features of the Saviour a resemblance to those of Bastide Grammont. His lips had had the same agonized curve when he pressed his clenched hands to his eyes.

Once more she rebelled against the boundless injustice. To live with the world was her real element; her entire nature was attuned to a kindly understanding with people. She asked for paper and pen, and wrote a letter to the Prefect.

"Justice, Count!" she wrote. "It is still time to prevent the worst. Remember the difficulty you had in extorting from me what was supposed to be the truth, remember the threats which made me compliant. I am a victim of circumstances. Whatever I confessed is false. No man of sense can discover the stamp of probability in my statements. In a freak of desperation I bore false witness. Tell my father that his cruelty is more sure to rob him of his daughter than her seeming transgression. Already I know not what I should believe, the past escapes my memory, my confidence begins to totter. If it is too much to ask for justice, then I beg for mercy. My destiny seeks to try me, but my heart is clear as the day."

It was in vain. It was too late for words, even if the mouth of a prophet had proclaimed them in tones of

thunder. The next morning many of the witnesses and prisoners were brought before Clarissa. Thus there were Bach, the Bancals, the soldier Colard, Rose Feral, Missonier, and little Madeleine Bancal. Bousquier was ill. The sight of the crushed, slouching, phantom-like creatures, intimidated by a hundred torments, revengefully ready for any deed, disturbed her to the core, and gave her at the same time a feeling of indelible contamination. "Is she the one?" each of the unfortunates was asked—and with insolent indifference they answered: "It is she." Missonier alone stood there laughing like an idiot.

Clarissa was amazed. She had not expected that the answers would be characterized by such assurance, such a matter-of-fact air. With inward sobs she held from her what was undeniable in the present situation, and shudderingly sought a path in her memory to that past situation on which the present was founded and which she was asked to verify. Her agitated spirit crept back to her earlier years, back to her youth, to her childhood, in order to discover her inimical second-self; that which had seemed weird and strange gradually became the essence and centre of her being, and the fateful night in Bancal's house turned, like the rest of the world, into a vision of blood and wounds.

But athwart the gloomy fancies the way led to Bastide Grammont; a flowery path among burning houses. It seemed fine to her to be assured of his guilt. Perchance he had pressed his lips to hers before he had clutched the murderous knife. She coupled her own obscurely felt guilt with his greater one. That which cut him off from humanity bound him to her. His reasons for the deed? She did not concern herself about them. No doubt it had struck root when she had first beheld him, when he had swallowed in a breath all the wood, all the springtime. No matter whether he dipped his hands in the sunlight or in blood, both pertained to his image, to her mysterious passion, and Fualdes was the evil genius and the destructive principle.

"Ah," she reflected in her singular musing, "had I known of it, I should have committed the deed myself and might have been a heroine like Charlotte Corday!" Why, however, did he deny it, why was he silent? Why that look of overwhelming contempt, which she could not forget and which still scorched her skin like a brand of infamy? Was he too proud to bow to a sentence which put his crime on a level with that of any highwayman? No doubt he did not recognize his judges. She could, then, draw him down to herself, make him dependent upon the breath of her lips; and she forgot the iron alternatives that confront one's destiny here, and let herself go like a child that knows nothing of death.

The trial before the court of assizes was set for the sixteenth of October. At noon of the tenth, Clarissa requested an interview with Monsieur Jausion. Conducted before the magistrate, she declared she knew about the whole matter, and wished to confess everything. In a voice trembling with excitement, Monsieur Jausion summoned his clerks.

"I came into the room and saw the knife glisten," Clarissa confessed. "I took refuge in the alcove, Bastide Grammont hurried after me, embraced and kissed me. He confided to me that Fualdes must die, for the old devil had destroyed his happiness and made life worthless to him. Bastide was intoxicated, as it were, with enthusiasm, and when I raised objections, he stopped my mouth with kisses once more, yes, he kissed me so hard that I could not offer any resistance. Then he had me take an oath, whereupon he left me and I heard a groaning, I heard a terrible cry; little Madeleine Bancal, who was lying in bed, raised herself suddenly and wept. Then I lost consciousness, and when I regained it I found myself in the street."

She recounted this story in a mechanically measured tone; her voice had a metallic ring, her eyes were veiled and half closed, her little hands hung heavy at her side, and when she ceased she gazed before her with a pleased smile.

"You had consorted with Bastide Grammont before that, then?" questioned the Magistrate.

"Yes, we met in the forest. In the neighborhood of La Morne there is an old well in the field; there, also, we used to meet frequently; particularly at night and by moonlight. Once Bastide took me on his horse and we rode at a furious pace to the gorge at Guignol. I asked, 'What are you fleeing from, Bastide?' for I was cold with fright; and he whispered: 'From myself and from the world.' Otherwise, however, he was always gentle. I have never known a better man."

More and more silvery rang her voice, and finally she spoke like one transported or asleep. Her statement was read aloud to her; she affixed her signature calmly and without hesitation, whereupon Monsieur Jausion stated to her that she was free.

In the château she was met by a hostile silence. The few domestics who remained whispered insolently behind her back. Nobody looked to her comfort, she had to fetch the pitcher of water herself from the kitchen. In the meantime when President Seguret returned home, he already knew, as did the whole town, about Clarissa's confession. The circumstance of her amorous relation to Bastide shed a sudden light upon preceding events and wove a halo about her former silence. But Monsieur Seguret only hardened his heart all the more, and when he passed her as she stood on the threshold of her room, he turned away his head with a gesture of disgust.

In the evening the President entertained a number of his friends. In the course of the meal the door opened and Clarissa made her appearance. Monsieur Seguret sprang from his chair, rage robbing him of speech. "Do not dare," he stammered hoarsely, "do not dare!"

Regardless of that, Clarissa advanced to the edge of the table. A radiant, bewitching expression lit up her countenance. She turned her full gaze upon her father, so that he dropped his glance as if dazzled. "Do not revile me, father," she said gently in a tone of captivating entreaty.

She turned to one of the guests with a commonplace question. The gentleman addressed hesitated, seemed confounded, astonished, but was unable to resist. Her features, pallid from the prison atmosphere, had acquired something dreamily spiritual; the most ordinary word from her lips had a charm of its own.

The conversation became general; the guests conquered, nay, forgot, their secret amazement. Clarissa's wit and playful humor exercised a great fascination. Along with them, there was a sensuously pungent air about her which does not escape men, her gestures had something flattering, her eyes glowed with a romantic fire. Disturbed, lending but a reluctant ear, Monsieur Seguret could, nevertheless, not wholly evade the witchery which took his guests captive. A power stronger than his resolve forced him to leniency; he took a timid share in the conversation, in spite of the heavy load upon his heart. The talk turned upon politics, books, art, hunting, the war, nothing and everything—a sparkling interchange of polished phrases and sparkling reflections, of smiles and plaudits, jest and earnest. At times it seemed like a scene in a play enacted with masterly skill, or as if a light intoxication induced by champagne had exhilarated their spirits; each one was at his best and strove to outdo himself, and Clarissa held and led them all, like a fairy who upon a chariot of clouds guides a flock of pigeons.

Shortly after midnight she rose, a fleeting, complacent, capricious smile flashing across her face, and, with a rather affected bow, she left the room, the men relapsing into a sudden, strange silence. Monsieur Seguret was agitated when he conducted his guests to the door, and they left the château as silently as thieves.

The President strode up and down the entrance-hall awhile, his thoughts chasing each other like a fleeing troop of wild animals. As the echo of his footsteps struck him unpleasantly, he stepped out into the garden, and, strolling in the winding paths, he inhaled the fresh night air with

a feeling of relief. As he was leaving the avenue of yews, a streak of light fell across the path; Monsieur Seguret stepped upon the low wall encircling a small fountain and could thus look into Clarissa's room, the windows of which stood open. With difficulty he refrained from crying out in astonishment on beholding Clarissa in a loose night-dress, dancing with an expression of ecstasy and with passionate movements. Her eyes were tightly closed, as if they were sealed, her eyebrows lifted in coquettish anxiety, her shoulders rocked in a stream of inaudible tones whose tempo seemed now hurried, now excessively slow. Suddenly she seized something and held it before her,—it was a mirror; glancing into it, she recoiled with a shudder and let it fall, so that the listener could hear the clinking of the broken glass; then she went up to the window, tore her dress from her bosom, laid her hand upon her bare breast and looked straight in the direction where Monsieur Seguret was standing. He crouched down as if a gun had been aimed at him; Clarissa, however, did not see him; she fixed her gaze awhile upon the sweeping clouds and then closed the window. The President remained standing at his post some time longer and was unable to divert the current of his thoughts. Whom is she deceiving? he pondered, distressed—herself, or people in general, or God?

For the first time in many days Clarissa enjoyed a peaceful sleep once more. Yet when she laid herself in her white bed the pillows seemed to assume a purple hue and she fell into slumber as into an abyss. She dreamed of landscapes, of weird old houses, and of a sky that looked like clotted blood. She herself wandered in the silvery light, and without feeling any touch or seeing any human form, she nevertheless had a sensation of passionate kisses being pressed upon her lips, and there was a stirring in her body as of life taking shape.

This strange mood and agitation endured for days afterward. A silvery veil lay between her and the world. For

fear of rending it, she spoke in low tones and walked with measured steps; beyond it, the sun had no more illuminating power than the moon. When, on the evening before the trial, she was returning from a stroll in the fields, she saw two women standing in the gateway of the château. One of them hurried forward to meet her, threw herself on her knees and seized her hands. It was Charlotte Arlabosse. "What have you done?" murmured the beautiful girl, panting. "He is innocent, by Christ's Passion, he is innocent! Have mercy, Madame, even if not upon me, at least upon his old mother!"

The crimson of the setting sun lit up her features, distorted by grief. Behind Charlotte there stood a lady of portly build, with great warts on her hands; yet her face was thin, and her countenance as motionless as that of the dead. She resembled a tree exuberant in strength, whose crown is blighted.

Clarissa made a deprecatory gesture, yet she retained a friendly and calm air. A second later, she thought she beheld herself in the kneeling figure, beheld her double; and a cruel triumph filled her heart. "Have no care, my child," said she, smiling, in a low voice; "as far as Bastide is concerned, everything is already settled." Thereupon she opened the gate and walked into the house. Charlotte arose and gazed motionless through the grating.

That night Clarissa retired early, but she awoke at four o'clock and began dressing. She selected a black velvet dress, and, as her only ornament, she fastened a diamond star in the edge of it at her bare neck. Her heart beat faster the nearer the hour approached. At eight o'clock the carriage drew up; it was a long drive to Alby, where the Court of Assizes sat. Monsieur Seguret had ridden away early in the morning, nobody knew whither.

The walls of the old town had hardly come in sight before such a mass of people was to be seen on the road that the horses were obliged to slacken their pace. They surrounded the carriage and gazed with strained attention

into the open windows; women lifted up their children that they, too, might see the famous Madame Mirabel. She did not seek to escape the general curiosity; with the happy smile of a bride she sat there, her fine black brows lifted high on her forehead.

On the stroke of ten President Enjalran, who was to preside at the trial, appeared in the overcrowded hall, and after the reading of the lengthy indictment Bastide was summoned to the hearing.

Firm as if cast in bronze he stood before the judge's table. His answers were cool, terse, and clear. From beginning to end he now saw through the senseless fable, woven of stupidity and malice. By a biting sarcasm he showed his unutterable contempt of all the accusations against him, thus placing the counsel assigned to him at the last moment, with whom he stubbornly refused to confer, in no slight embarrassment.

Now and then he turned his glance toward the tall, church-like windows, and when he caught sight of a bird that had alighted on the sill and dug his yellow bill into the feathers on his breast, he lost his self-command for a moment and his lips parted in pain.

His examination lasted but a short time. It was only a matter of form, for his fate was sealed. With Bach, Colard, and the other accomplices, Monsieur d' Enjalran's task was easy; their testimony was petrified, as it were. Bousquier had died in prison. Of the others, each one sought to grab at a little remnant of innocence; they produced the impression of men crushed and wholly bereft of will-power. A sensation was created by old Bancal, who became hysterical during his examination, and then, protesting his innocence, behaved like a madman. The humpbacked Missonier grinned when the question of his presence at the murder was discussed; he had become brutalized by his long imprisonment and the repeated examinations. Little Madeleine Bancal behaved like an actress, and

greeted her acquaintances and patrons in the audience by throwing them kisses. Rose Feral turned deadly pale at the sight of the bloody rags on the Judge's table, and could not utter a word. Madame Bancal remembered that Monsieur Fualdes was dragged into her house by six men, that he was made to sign a number of papers, crisscross, as she said. The day following, she had found one of these bills, made out upon stamped paper, but as it was stained with blood, had burned it. More than that she positively refused to confess, met all questions with a stolid silence, and declared finally that whatever else she knew she would confide to her confessor alone.

The witnesses testified placidly the most incredible things. Their memory was so good that they recollected the hour and minute of the merest trifles, which are forgotten from one day to the next. In night and fog they had seen and recognized people, their features, their gestures, the color of their clothes. They had heard speaking, whispering, sighing, through thick walls. A beggar by the name of Laville, who used to sleep in Missonier's stable, had heard not only the organ-grinders but also four men carrying a burden, something like men dragging a barrel. Bastide Grammont laughed repeatedly at statements which he declared to be shameless lies. When the Bancal woman began her testimony he remarked that since it came so late he had expected that the old woman would be delivered of it with still greater difficulty. To another witness he represented, in a vibrating voice, how the hand of Heaven rested heavy upon her, and reminded her of the awful death of her child. He was like a fencer whose opponent is the mist; nobody, indeed, replied to him, he stood alone, the contradictions which he believed he had demonstrated remained there, that was all. At first he was self-confident and maintained his composure, looked firmly into the witnesses' faces; then he felt as if his sense for the significance of words were leaving him, not alone for his own but for that of all the words in existence, or as if the

ground were giving way under him and he were falling irresistibly from space to space into an awful, infinite, boundless void. His mind refused to work; he asked himself, horrified, whether this was still life, dared call itself life; Nature's glorious structure seemed to him ravaged like a wall rent by a storm, the speaking mouth of all these people struck him as nothing but a chasm convulsively and repellently opening and shutting, darkness invaded his spirit, he burned with a feeling of shame, he felt ashamed in the name of the nameless God, ashamed that his body was molded like that of these creatures around him. He had loved the world, had once loved the people in it; now he was ashamed of them. It pained him to think that he had ever cherished hopes, buoyed up his heart with promises, that sunshine and sky had ever been able to lure from him a joyful glance, sportive words a smile; he wished he had, like the stone by the wayside, never betrayed what he felt, so that he might not have been doomed to bear witness before his own branded, scourged, unspeakably humiliated self. Thought alone seemed offensive enough to him, how much more so what he could have said; it was nothing, less than a breath. What could he depend upon? what hope for? They had no faith, not even in his scorn, not even in his silence. And Bastide locked himself up, and looked into the dawning countenance of Death.

It was already growing dark when the King's evidence, Madame Mirabel, was finally summoned to the court-room, and the whole tired assemblage started up convulsively like a single body. She entered, and in spite of the close air of the room, she seemed to be shivering. She trembled visibly on taking the oath. Monsieur d' Enjalran urged her to testify in accordance with the truth. In a strange, uniformly dull tone, yet speaking rather hurriedly, she repeated the statement that she had made before the examining magistrate. An oppressive silence pervaded the hall, and her voice, in consequence, grew steadily lower. She knew now a multitude of details, had seen the long

knife lying on the table, had seen Bancal and Colard bring in a wooden tub, and the lawyer Fualdes sitting with bowed shoulders near the lamp, writing. She had also seen the mysterious stranger with the wooden leg, and noticed that Bach and Bousquier unfolded a large white cloth. To the question why she had appeared in men's clothes, she gave no reply. And when, with fingers convulsively clasped, head bowed, her slender body bent slightly forward, writhing almost imperceptibly, as if in the clutches of an animal, yet with that blissful, sweet smile which lent her countenance an expression of subdued madness, she related with bated breath how Bastide had embraced and kissed her in the dark adjoining room, he sprang up suddenly, wrung his hands in despair and made a few hurried steps until he stood at Clarissa's side. His heavy breathing was audible to all.

The presiding officer rebuked him for his behavior, which he designated as indelicate, but Bastide cried in a firm, ringing voice: "Before God, who hears me and will judge me, I declare that it is all an awful lie. I have never as much as touched that woman or set eyes upon her."

Clarissa turned as white as chalk. It seemed to her as if she had but just now heard the clinking of the shattered mirror which she had dashed to the floor after the dance. When the prosecuting attorney asked her to continue, she remained silent; her eyes rolled and her whole body shook convulsively.

"Speak out!" exclaimed Bastide, addressing her, and indignation almost choked his voice, "speak! Your silence is even more ruinous to me than all the lies."

Clarissa lifted her eyes to him and asked with curious emotion: "Do you really not know me, Bastide?"

"No! no! no!" he burst out, and looking upward he muttered in distress: "She is demented."

Within a second's space Clarissa grew fiery red and again deathly pale. And turning toward Bastide once more, she exclaimed in a terrible tone of reproach: "Oh, murderer!"

The public applauded. Clarissa reeled, however; an usher of the court hurried to her side and caught her in his arms, a number of ladies left their places and busied themselves about her, and half an hour elapsed before she regained consciousness; but her appearance was as changed as if she had suddenly aged by twenty years. Monsieur d'Enjalran tried to continue the examination, but she answered only in incoherent words; she did not know; it was possible; she did not wish to contradict. Bastide Grammont had resumed his seat in the prisoner's dock; immeasurable distress and consternation were pictured on his countenance. His counsel bade Clarissa, since she had spoken, to continue. "I adjure you, Madame, make yourself clear," he said; "it depends upon you whether an innocent man shall be saved or shall be sent to the scaffold." Clarissa remained silent, as if she had not heard; in her breast there surged, like morning mist over the waters, a consoling and captivating image. Counselor Pinaud now turned to her with a severe exhortation; she was not to think she could make her assertions at will and suppress what she wished. The prosecuting attorney spoke up for her, saying that the cause of her silence was known; she herself had asserted that she entertained a conviction the grounds of which she could not state; it should suffice that she had uttered what was of the greatest importance; nay, he declared, moreover, that any further urging would be improper. He had not concluded his speech when Clarissa interrupted him; raising her right arm she said in solemn protest: "I have taken no oath."

Bastide Grammont looked up. Shaking off his stupor, he raised himself slowly and began in a voice all the more affecting by its calmness: "Prison walls do not speak. And yet the time will come when they will find a voice and will proclaim the secret means which have been employed to force all these wretches to make lies a shameful bulwark of their lives. Fualdes was not my enemy, he was only my creditor. If covetousness had misled a man other-

wise decent and moderate, if it had armed his hand, I would never, for all that, have raised it against a defenseless old man. If you want a sacrifice, take me; I am ready, but do not mingle my lot with that of this brood. My family, who have always dwelt in the country, and have followed the customs and simple ways of rural life, are disgraced. My mother weeps and is crushed. Judge whether I, who am plunged in this sea of misfortune, can still cherish a love of life. I loved freedom once, I loved animals, the water, the sky, the air, and the fruits of the trees; but now I am dishonored, and if there were a future before me it would be sullied with shame, and the time would have an ill taste. Is it a court of justice before which I have been summoned? No, it is a hunt, the judge has become a hunter and prepares the innocent one to be a tidbit for the rabble. I ask no longer for justice, it is too late to mete out justice to me, too late, were the crown of France itself to be offered to me. I surrender myself to you to destroy me, your conscience will be loaded with that burden. One guilty man makes many, and your children's children will for this flood the living world with disgrace."

A paralyzed silence succeeded these words. But suddenly there burst forth an indescribable tumult. The public and the jurors arose and clenched their fists at Bastide Grammont, screamed and howled in wild confusion, Monsieur d'Enjalran's exhortation dying away unheard. And just as suddenly a deathly silence ensued. A faint, long-drawn cry which arose in the din, and now continued its plaintive note, petrified the faces of the listeners. All eyes tourned toward Clarissa. She felt the glances showering down upon her like the beams in a falling building.

Her heart was aflame with a desire for expiation . . .

The speech of the public prosecutor gathered together once more the weapons of hatred which Rumor had forged against its victims; with cunning skill, he painted the night of the murder in such colors that the horror of it seemed

to live for the first time. Bastide's advocate, on the other hand, contented himself with high-sounding phrases; he waxed warm, his listeners remained cold. While he was speaking there was a shoving and pushing in the rear of the hall; some of the ladies shrieked, a fair-sized dog ran through an opening in the bar, looked around him with glistening eyes, and, giving a short bark, crouched at Bastide's feet. Deeply moved, he laid his hand on the animal's neck, and motioned the usher, who wanted to remove it, back with a commanding gesture.

When the court retired for consultation, no one dared speak above a whisper. A woman sobbed and she was told to be quiet; it was the Benoit girl, Colard's sweetheart. She had wound her arms about the poor wretch's shoulders and her tear-stained face expressed but one desire—to share his fate. A relative of Bastide approached him in order to speak to him; Bastide shook his head and did not even look at the man. A sort of drowsiness had settled on his countenance—at any rate, words no longer carried any weight in his ears. Yet it happened that he lifted his eyes once more and after coursing through illimitable space they met those of Clarissa. Now the strange woman did not strike him as so strange. He heard again the sound of her voice when she called him murderer; was it not rather a cry for help than an accusation? and that beseeching look, as if invisible hands were clutching at her throat? and that most delicate form so singularly free from indications of her age, quivering like a young birch in autumn?

Two lonely shipwrecked beings are driven by the currents of the ocean to the same spot, coming from opposite ends of the earth, unable to abandon the plank upon which their life depends, unable even to grasp each other's hands, simply driven by the gradually dying wind to unknown depths. There was something weird in their mutual feeling of compassion. Yet Bastide's pained and gloomy astonishment gave way to the dreamy intoxication of

fatigue, and the watchful eyes of his dog appeared to him like two reddish stars between black tree-tops. He heard the sentence of death when the court returned; he had risen, and listened to the words of the presiding judge; it sounded like the splashing of raindrops on withered leaves. He heard himself say something, but what it was he hardly knew. He saw many faces turned toward him in the dim light, and they gave him the impression of worm-eaten and decaying apples.

The verdict concerning the other accused persons was not to be announced until the following day. The crowds in the hall, in the entrances, and on the street, dispersed slowly. When Clarissa passed through the corridor every one stepped timidly aside.

She had learned that Bastide was not to be taken back to Rodez, but was to remain in the prison at Alby. She thereupon dismissed the carriage that was waiting for her, betook herself to an inn near by, where she asked for a room, and wrote a letter to her father — a few feverishly agitated sentences: "I know no longer what is truth and what is falsehood; Bastide is innocent, and I have destroyed him, though my desire was to help him; Yes and No are in my breast like two extinguished flames; if I were to return whence I came I should suffer a continual death; for that reason and because people live as they do, I go where I must." It was already past midnight when she asked to speak to the host. She requested him to send the letter in the morning to Château Perrié by a reliable messenger; she then asked the startled man to sell her a small basket of fresh fruit. The host expressed a polite regret that he had nothing more in his storeroom. Passionately urgent, she offered him ten, twentyfold its value and threw a gold piece on the table. "It is for a dying person," she said, "everything depends upon it." The man gazed anxiously at the pallid, gleaming countenance of the distinguished looking woman and pondered, declaring finally

that he would rouse his neighbor, and bidding her wait. Left alone, she knelt down by the bedside, buried her face in the pillows and wept. After half an hour the host returned, carrying a basket full of pears, grapes, pomegranates, and peaches. Shaking his head, he followed her with his eyes as she hastened away, and held the sealed letter, which he was to forward, inquisitively up to the light.

The streets were desolate and bathed in shadowy moonlight. The windows of the little houses were blinking drowsily; under a gateway stood the night-watchman with a halberd and mumbled like a drunken man. In front of the low prison building there was an open space; Clarissa seated herself on a stone bench, and, as there was a pump near by and she felt thirsty, drank her fill. The softly swelling outlines of the hills melted almost imperceptibly into the sky, and behind a depression in the landscape a fire-light was glowing; she seemed to hear, too, on listening intently, the ringing of bells. The whole world was not asleep, then, and she could link her anxious heart to human concerns once more. After a time she rose, stepped over to the building, set the basket of fruit on the ground, and knocked with the knocker at the gate. It was a long while before the door-keeper appeared and gruffly demanded what she wanted. "I must speak to Bastide Grammont," she declared. The man made a face as if a demented person had waylaid him, growled in a threatening tone and was about to bang the door in her face. Clarissa clutched his arm with one hand, and tore the diamond brooch from her breast with the other. "There, there, there!" she stammered. The old man raised his lantern and examined the sparkling jeweled ornament on all sides. Clarissa misinterpreted his grinning, anxious joy, thought he was not satisfied, and gave him her purse into the bargain. "What is in the basket?" he inquired respectfully but suspiciously. She showed him what it contained. He contented himself with that, thought she was most likely

the mistress of the condemned man, and, upon locking the door, walked on in front of her. They descended a few steps, then crossed a narrow passage. "How long do you wish to stay inside?" asked the keeper, when they had reached an iron door. Clarissa drew a deep breath and replied in a whisper that she would give three knocks on the door. The old man nodded, said he would wait at the head of the stairs, opened the door cautiously, handed the woman his lantern and locked the door behind her.

Inside Clarissa clung to the wall to give her riotous pulses time to subside. The room seemed moderately large and not altogether uninhabitable. Bastide lay on a pallet along the opposite wall, asleep and fully dressed. "What a stillness!" thought Clarissa shuddering, and stole softly to the bedside of the sleeping man. What quiet in that countenance, too, what a beautiful slumber, thought she, and her lips parted in mute sorrow. She placed the lantern on the floor where its light would strike his face, then she knelt down and listened to his steady breathing. Bastide's mouth was firmly closed, his eyelids were motionless, a sign of dreamlessness; his long beard encircled cheeks and chin like brown brushwood, his head was thrown slightly backward, and his hair shone with a moist gleam. Gradually the peace of his countenance passed into Clarissa too; all words, all signs which she had brought with her vanished, she determined to do nothing more than place her gift by his bed and depart. Accordingly she emptied the basket, and started and paused every time she heard but a grain of sand crunch under her feet. When she had laid out all the fruit and passed her hand tenderly over each, she grew more and more peaceful and calm; she felt herself so strangely bound to death that she dismissed the thought of leaving this room with a feeling akin to fear, and prepared to do what possessed her so strongly, with a composed assurance. A desire to kiss him arose within her, and she actually bent down toward him, but a commanding awe arrested her, more even than

the fear that he might awake. Her body twisted and turned, she embraced him in spirit and felt as if she were freed from the earth, like a pearl dropped from a ring. She then rose quietly, walked softly to the other side of the room, stretched herself on the floor, took a small penknife and opened the veins in both wrists by deep cuts. Within a quarter of an hour she sighed twice, and the hand of Death sought in vain to wipe the enraptured smile from her pallid lips.

Bastide still slept on, that abysmal sleep where total oblivion chains and numbs body and spirit. Then he began to dream. He found himself in a spacious, secluded chamber, the centre of which was occupied by a richly decked table. Many people were seated around it; they were carousing and having a merry time. Suddenly all eyes were turned to the middle of the table, where a vessel of opaque blue glass, which had not been there before, now stood. What was in the glass receptacle? what could it signify? who brought it? was asked in muffled tones. Thereupon an uncanny silence ensued; all gazed now at the blue vessel, now, with sullen suspicion, at each other. All at once, the jovial revelers of a few moments ago arose and one accused the other of having placed the covered dish on the table. A violent clamor now arose, some drew their poniards, others swung chairs about, and meanwhile a slim, nude girl's figure was seen to emerge, like white smoke, from the vessel on the table. Bastide knew the face, it was that of the false witness Clarissa; with snake-like glistening eyes she gazed at him, always only at him. All the men followed her glance and they hurled themselves upon him. "You must die! You must die!" resounded from hoarse throats, but while they were still shouting their voices died away, the shadowy arms of the false witness stretched themselves out and divided one of the walls, exposing to view a blooming garden, in the centre of which stood a scaffold hung with branches laden with ripe fruit. Bastide was a boy once more; slowly he strode out, Clar-

issa's hands waved above him and plucked the fruit, and his fear of death was dulled by their intoxicating perfume, which, like a cloud, filled the entire hall, nay, the entire universe.

Here he awoke. His first drowsy glance fell upon the flickering light of the lantern, the second upon a huge pear, which, yellow as a rising moon, lay at his bedside. In dazed, joyous astonishment he grasped it, but on raising it to his lips noticed that it was stained with blood. He was startled, thought he was still dreaming. Beyond the windows the gray light of dawn was already spreading. Now he caught sight of the other fruit, gorgeous and abundant, as if paradise had been pillaged. But all was stained with blood . . . A little rivulet of blood, divided into two streams, trickled over from the corner of the wall.

And Bastide saw . . .

He tried to rise, but his unfinished sleep still paralyzed his body.

Bitter and wild grief wrung his breast. He longed no more for the day which awoke so drearily outside; weary of his own heart-beats and perfectly sure of what had happened and must happen, he yearned for the final end. He desired no special knowledge of the consummated fate of the being on the other side of the cell, who, dominated by mysterious spirits, had trust herself into his path — no knowledge of men and what they built or destroyed. Man was an abomination to him.

And yet when his glance fell upon the splendid fruit once more, he felt the woe of all creation; he wished at least to close the eyes of the giver. But just then the keeper, grown suspicious, turned the key in the lock.

BERNHARD KELLERMANN

GOD'S BELOVED (1911)

TRANSLATED BY KATHARINE ROYCE

BEFORE dawn the lawyer rose from his bed, and at that very moment a thousand little birds, who lived in his room, began to twitter and trill. "Awake so early, little ones!" whispered the lawyer. He never spoke aloud. "Well, good morning! Hush! Hush!"

And the thousand little birds chirped in answer and then obediently stopped singing.

The lawyer wrapped a thick woolen shawl around his shoulders, for he was always very cold, slipped his feet into his wadded boots, drew on his gloves, put his fur cap on his bald head and went out of the house.

It was still night and everything looked unreal and magical. Now and then the grass would bow down with a sudden jerk, as people do in their sleep, if they dream that they are falling, and then for a moment the lawyer would feel a warm breath, which vanished as suddenly as it came. A confused mass of gray and black clouds swept rapidly across the sky and at the zenith three golden stars were visible in a line, so that they looked like a flying spear darting through the clouds. The lawyer gazed thoughtfully for some moments at the flying spear while his mind struggled with some dim idea. Then he hurried with short shuffling steps as quietly as possible along the sandy paths of the asylum gardens.

"Hush, keep still!" he whispered, as he passed some bushes in which something was stirring.

At the edge of the kitchen-garden there was an old well

with a pump which was no longer used, and here the lawyer began his task. He put the watering-pot under the spout and began to pump, trying to make no noise. As there was but little water in the well and the lawyer pumped slowly and cautiously, it took him half an hour to fill the pot. Then, panting and coughing, the little man carried it to the garden beds, and began to water the flowers, smiling happily and speaking lovingly to them meanwhile. "Don't be in such a hurry, little ones," he whispered, "my dear children, how you drink! Good morning!"

But just then began a great fluttering and stirring in an elder bush. Hundreds of little birds suddenly thrust their heads out between the leaves and chirped to the lawyer.

He made a startled gesture. "For heaven's sake, be quiet!" said he. "You are always trying to be the first! Every morning. Hush!" And immediately silence reigned in the elder bush.

The lawyer went quietly from bed to bed and watered his flowers. He stopped frequently to draw a deep breath and gazed up at the sky, where the motionless golden spear still seemed to be darting through the clouds. He pondered for some time over that and shook his head. From the "violent ward" came a longdrawn wailing, which at regular intervals was merged in pitiful weeping. But the lawyer paid no attention to these sounds. He only heard the birds fluttering their wings and whetting their beaks in the bushes.

A night nurse passed by, shivering.

"Already at work, so early?" said she, turning her pale face toward him.

The lawyer put down his watering-pot, bowed and took off his cap. "One must keep at it," he whispered, "the little ones will not wait."

Then he began with the tenderest care to water the beds beside the principal buildings. He paused by the open windows of the kitchen, which were very low, and examined the window-sills. He shook his head and seemed much

grieved and disappointed. Yes, they had once more forgotten to put out the bread crumbs for his birds! How could any one rely upon such maids?

He hunted up a couple of little pebbles on the path and threw them, one at a time, into the dark kitchen, laughing softly to himself. They really must learn to be more careful. O, he would soon teach them to put the bread crumbs regularly on the window-sill. There was plenty of gravel on the path. And what if they had already complained so often!

The watering-pot was empty and in the gray light of dawn the lawyer walked back to the well.

Ever since his wife's death the poor man had been a friend of birds and flowers. When she was dying, she had said, with her last breath, "The flowers must always be watered and the birds must always be fed." Those had been her last words and the lawyer heard them ringing in his ears day and night. He heard them in every breeze, in every conversation, even when all was silent they were wafted to him. In his wife's room there had stood a dark, heavy clothes press (which, oddly enough, he could still remember), and this large, dark object also repeated his wife's last words, although it made no sound whatever. The lawyer continued to live in seclusion and solitude, and watered the flowers in the window-boxes and fed and watered the birds in the cages. The flowers withered and the birds died, one by one. The lawyer took no notice of his loss. Indeed it seemed to him as if the birds were hopping and twittering gaily in their cages. They hatched their young and kept on increasing. And the lawyer took a childlike pleasure in this increase. Finally there were hundreds, thousands, whose chirping he heard from morning till night. They lived in the walls, on the ceiling, everywhere. And the good man could not understand why others neither saw nor heard them.

As the sun rose, the lawyer had already finished a good part of his day's work and turned back to the ward, which looked like a country cottage standing in a pretty garden.

In the doorway, leaning against the doorpost, Michael Petroff, a former officer in the Russian army, stood smiling, and greeted him with a bright, cheerful "Good morning, my friend!"

The lawyer in his woolen shawl, scarf and wadded boots, bowed and touched his cap.

"Good morning, Captain!"

They bowed several times, for they respected each other highly, and shook hands only after the completion of this ceremony.

"Did you sleep well, Herr Advokat?" asked Michael Petroff, bending forward a little and smiling pleasantly.

"Did I sleep well? Yes, thank you."

"I too passed an excellent night," Michael Petroff continued with a bright happy laugh. "Really excellent. I had a dream—," he added, smiling and gazing out into the garden with his right eye half closed. "Yes, indeed!—Now do come into my office, my friend. I have news. After you!" He laid his hand on the little lawyer's shoulder and with a slight bow allowed him to pass in first.

Captain Michael Petroff was a tall slender man with cheerful steel-blue eyes and a small blond mustache, which like his soft, blond, parted hair, was beginning to turn white. He was dressed with scrupulous neatness and was carefully shaved. His chin was round and exquisitely formed, though a trifle weak, the modeling of his mouth was unusually fine and delicate, like that of a mere boy.

"Please be seated," said Michael Petroff, while with a gesture he invited the lawyer to sit on the sofa.

"But perhaps I am intruding?" whispered the lawyer, and remained standing.

"No, indeed! How could you—?" And Michael Petroff led the lawyer over to the sofa. The little man sat down timidly, looking gratefully up at his host. "You are so very busy—I know—," said he, and nodded at the writing table, which was heaped with documents, newspapers, and manuscripts.

"I have plenty to do," added Michael Petroff, with a curious smile on his pretty boyish lips. "But one has always time for one's friends. Here, do listen! I have just outlined a petition to the Hessian government—," Michael Petroff smiled and balanced a sheet of paper on his hand—"The Hessian government is to be urgently requested, most—urgently—requested, to reconsider the verdict in the case of a teacher!"

Michael Petroff glanced at his guest while four deep lines suddenly appeared on his forehead. "This teacher," he went on, "was sentenced to four years' imprisonment, only think—four years. He had ten mouths to feed and he embezzled some funds. Voilà tout! What do you think of that! Ha, ha! That is the way of the world, you see! In my petition I demand not merely that the sentence should be revoked, but also that officers' salaries should be increased. I demand it—I, Captain Michael Petroff, and I shall also appear in the *Non-Partisan*. You will see, my friend!" Michael Petroff cast a fearless, triumphant glance at the little baldheaded lawyer, who listened and nodded, although he did not quite understand what the Captain meant.

"You do a great deal of good!" he whispered, nodding, while a childish smile flitted over his sad, pale little face. And after a moment's reflection he added, "You are a good man. You surely are!"

Michael Petroff shook his head. "I do my duty!" he declared earnestly. And laying his hand on his heart while his clear steel-blue eyes flashed, he added: "My sacred duty!"

Captain Michael Petroff, former officer in a St. Petersburg regiment, considered it his life work to plead for justice in this world. He called himself "The Tribunal of right and justice." He subscribed for two large daily papers, and searched them every day for cases in which, according to his judgment, injustice had been done to some one. And every day Michael Petroff found cases. Cases and nothing but cases. These cases he cut out,

arranged them in chronological order and immediately went to work on them.

He often sat up late in his office, as he called his room, or in his editorial sanctum, as he sometimes designated it in an undertone when speaking to his confidential friend. There he would sit and write, in a hand as neat as copperplate, his memorials, protests, petitions, which he delivered every day at six o'clock to the head physician, Dr. März, who had undertaken to forward them regularly. Dr. März was glad to receive these manuscripts which he laid in a separate pigeonhole, in order to use them from time to time as material for his work on Graphomania.

The little time that this activity left him, Michael Petroff employed in editing his newspaper. And it was because of this paper that he sometimes secretly referred to his room as "his editorial sanctum." This newspaper did not appear regularly, but only when it happened to be ready. It usually appeared once a year, but sometimes twice, if his nervous condition urged him to greater haste.

Michael Petroff's paper was a fairly accurate representation of an ordinary daily paper, from the heading, in which the conditions of subscription were stated, as well as the name of the city in which the paper appeared — the city was arbitrarily chosen by Michael Petroff — to the fictitious names of the publisher and editor. Like any other paper, it contained advertisements, which Michael Petroff simply cut out of other papers, a leading article, and contributions. The whole editorial part, however, was engaged — with the exception of a few articles which were slipped in as a disguise — with the question: Is the confinement of Michael Petroff, Captain in the Russian army, justified? The titles of the separate articles varied from year to year, although the ideas expressed in them were similar. The Russian government's Ultimatum! — A letter from the Czar to the head physician, Dr. März! And every year the paper appeared under a different name. Michael Petroff called it *The Eye of the World, The Conscience of Europe, The Bayonet.*

Michael Petroff made no secret of his petitions, but he spoke of his newspaper only to his confidant, the lawyer. And although he was naturally friendly and very kind-hearted, possibly the reason he was so extremely fond of the lawyer was that he could talk to him about his paper.

"Just a moment, my friend," said he. "There is such news! I want to tell you the very latest. Please stay."

He went to the door and cleared his throat and listened. Then he stepped out into the corridor, coughed, looked up and down and came back satisfied. He drew out the editorial drawer, the key of which he wore around his neck, and with a happy laugh began: "The very latest! Listen! This cannot fail to have its effect. Just hear the headline: Doctor März arrested!"

"Dr. März arrested?" whispered the lawyer anxiously, looking up at Petroff in open-mouthed astonishment.

Michael Petroff laughed.

"Arrested? No, of course not. I go on to explain in the article that Dr. März is going to be arrested, and that the only way for him to escape arrest is to give Michael Petroff his discharge immediately."

The lawyer nodded. "I see," said he, smiling because he saw Petroff looking so cheerful. And yet he was not thinking anything about Petroff's article, but only that he must give the birds their water. He grew restless and started to rise.

"Just a moment, please!" said Michael Petroff eagerly. "Yes, it is really an excellent idea," he continued rapidly, while his cheeks flushed with joy. "In my article I emphasize the fact that Dr. März is an honorable man and a highly prized and respected physician, so that his conduct in this particular case causes widespread astonishment. I should like to ask you, my friend, what he will do when he reads this article? Ha, ha, ha! They will find out something, my dear fellow. I am not going to be unkind to him, not in the least. Well, in fact, in fact, I shall say, my dear Doctor, ha, ha! But just look at this too, in the *Non-Partisan*. Only look at this title, will you please!"

"Which one—?"

"Why, this one!"

"An interrogation point?"

"Yes! Ha, ha— Simply an interrogation point! And beneath that: Where is Michael Petroff? An appeal to the public! But look at this, in the little *Feuilleton:* Michael Petroff, a Captain in the Russian army, has just completed his six-volume work on Shooting Stars. All the scientific journals are praising the clearness and acumen of this epoch-making work. Ha, ha, ha, didn't I tell you that there was news, my friend?"

The lawyer crouched in the sofa corner and made such an effort to think, that he held his breath.

"I don't understand—?" he whispered and slowly shook his head.

"What don't you understand?"

"That he should keep you in confinement."

Michael Petroff glanced at the lawyer in surprise. Then he leaned forward and whispered: "But I have already told you that my relations pay him."

"They pay him?"

"Yes, of course!" answered Michael Petroff cheerfully. "Enormous sums. Millions!"

"Oh!" The lawyer began to understand now.

"Yes, you see, that is how it is in the world!" said Michael Petroff, and snapped his fingers.

But the lawyer did not wholly comprehend yet.

"I do not understand," he began again. "Dr. März is so kindhearted. I live here, I have my home and my food and I pay nothing. He has never asked me for any money.—I have no money, you know," he ended anxiously in a still lower tone.

Michael Petroff laid his hand pompously but protectingly on his friend's shoulder. "You work in the garden," said he, "you water the flowers. How could he have the face to expect you to pay money? That is perfectly simple. But perhaps you too have relations outside who pay for you?"

"Relations?"

"Yes. Outside—there!" A bitter smile curved Michael Petroff's beautiful boyish mouth. Should he tell this little old man in the woolen shawl where he really was? Should he perhaps explain to this little old man with the grayish wrinkled face, that there was an "outside"—where one could even get into a railway train or wash one's hands before sitting down to table? Suddenly he stood up on his tiptoes and instantly lost all conception of his own actual body; he seemed to himself like a gigantic tower rising up to the clouds, and looking down on the little bald-headed man, who had only two thin tufts of gray hair above his ears. He was seized with the desire to make the lawyer cry.

But suddenly he bowed slightly to his friend and said: "Please forgive Michael Petroff!" He walked across the room, then turned to his guest and said in precisely his usual tone: "Will the fair weather last today?"

"I think so—I am not sure," answered the lawyer doubtfully.

"Well, we will play cricket this afternoon. Are you cold?"

"Yes," whispered the lawyer and drew his scarf closer.

Michael Petroff gazed at him with his head on one side. "I cannot understand how you can be cold today." And he laughed gaily. "Come," said he, "let us—" he paused, for he did not know what he wanted to do—"Let us—Oh yes, let us go and see Friend Engelhardt. Come!—The Doctor was with him last night," he ended mysteriously.

"The Doctor?"

"Yes. Our friend is ill. Hm, hm." Michael Petroff carefully locked up the manuscript of his newspaper, put on a big gray English traveling cap, looked in the glass, and they left the room together. Michael Petroff laughed a soft guttural laugh. At Engelhardt's door they paused to listen, and then knocked.—

There were two great days in the year for Michael Petroff.

One was his birthday, the sixteenth of May. Michael Petroff never forgot it. On May sixteenth he would walk about with an important air, and looking about him he would say to every one he met: "This is my birthday. I thank you for your good wishes!" The attendant always came before dinner and asked him to come to Dr. März's room to receive his congratulations.

Then Michael Petroff would go, with quick, light steps to Dr. März's parlor, shake hands with him and thank him for the wonderful bouquet of white roses that Dr. März gave him.

Michael never suspected where the bunch of white roses came from. He did not know that, on his birthday, his wife and daughter stood behind the portière of the parlor, nor that they made the long journey every year to see him. The first few years the Captain's wife had had golden hair, but it had gradually turned gray, and now it was white, although she was still quite a young woman. Formerly she used to come alone, but for three years past she had always been accompanied by a young lady, who wept bitterly when she arrived and when she went away. This young lady had but one ear and concealed the disfigurement by the way in which she dressed her hair. Michael Petroff had cut off her other ear when she was only a child, during the first outbreak of his malady.

Michael Petroff chatted and laughed pleasantly with the head physician and carried the roses to his friend, the lawyer.

"Here are some flowers for you. I do not want them!"

The lawyer's eyes opened wide with delight, and he took the roses carefully as if they were fragile.

Michael Petroff's second great day was that on which his newspaper appeared.

The paper was always printed in the town. Michael Petroff had induced the porter of the Sanatorium to under-

take this commission. The porter delivered the manuscript to the printer and brought back the twenty-five printed copies to Michael Petroff. And then for a few days he was in a state of the greatest excitement. He sent the paper to the doctors, especially to Dr. März, and waited in suspense to see what effect it would have. At such times he could not work, but wandered about the house and garden all day. If he met a doctor, he would stop and cast a triumphant glance at him, smiling as if secure of victory.

But a few days later he would question the doctors: "May I ask whether you have received a newspaper?"

"A newspaper?"

"Yes! I received it myself. *The Bayonet?*"

"Oh yes, I remember now. I will take a look at it."

"Yes, please do. There may be some things in it that will interest you. Ha, ha, ha!" And he laid his hand on the Doctor's shoulder and gazed meaningly at him.

Finally he asked the head physician himself.

"Yes, yes," answered he, "certainly I read that paper, my dear Captain. A curious thing. I made inquiries immediately, but the editors were not to be found, in spite of all my pains. They do not seem to be in existence. Or else they are gone. I scarcely know what to think of the paper, my dear Captain."

Then for a few days Michael Petroff would wander disconsolately about, and his depression might even bring on melancholia or frenzy. But after a few days he would always regain his cheerful spirits. He would greet his friends, and apologize for his disagreeable behavior. And immediately he would begin to plan out another newspaper. This time it must surely be a success. Take care, Dr. März!

Such was Michael Petroff, Captain in the Russian army.

Friend Engelhardt, whom Michael Petroff and the lawyer were going to visit, was a gray-haired man about fifty years old, who had been only a year in Dr. März's sana-

torium. He was a shoemaker by trade and had sat all his life, year in, year out, under his glass globe of water,* tapping away on leather. He was unmarried, lived much alone and since he was industrious and economical, he had laid up a comfortable little property. And there he sat under his glass globe and nothing whatever happened. But gradually the globe began to look more and more strange to him. It flashed upon him and dazzled him, so that he sometimes felt for a moment a certain unacknowledged fear of it. It seemed to grow bigger and bigger, until at last the time came when Engelhardt's hair stood on end with horror—

And thenceforth he suffered from the strange and terrible delusion that he was the centre of the universe and that it was his task to keep the whole world in equilibrium. The myriad forces of all creation were united in him and he felt with agonizing constancy, how the suns and the planets were circling about him, and how everything was rushing and whirling through space. If a chain of skaters revolves around one man who is in the middle, that man will feel the extraordinary force with which the two rushing wings whirl around him, and he will be obliged to exert all his strength to maintain his position. Engelhardt felt precisely so and since his efforts were unremitting, his delusion exhausted him to such an extent, that in one year he had aged as if in ten. Even if—so he said—the heavenly bodies had been so marvelously ordained by the almighty Creator, that through all eternity they revolved in their foreordained circles and spirals (as he said), yet he suffered beyond endurance from the slightest disturbance in outer space. During the winter he had been unable to sleep for two weeks, because a swiftly moving star was pulling at him. Curiously enough, at this very time a comet appeared which astonished all the astronomers. Just then Schwindt, an attendant, had died under peculiar

* German shoemakers used a glass globe full of water placed in front of their lamp, to concentrate the light upon their work.

From the Painting by Hans Unger

circumstances and Engelhardt—as he himself said—had *drunk in* his soul, from which he had gained fresh strength, sufficient to last him throughout the spring and summer. But now again his task was wearing him out more every day and his powers were failing rapidly. The shooting stars and the swarms of meteors dragged at him, until he became dizzy, and especially the moon exerted at this period a terrible power over him. It sucked in his strength, and Engelhardt imagined that at any moment the ground might give way beneath him and he might sink into the depths and the whole universe might collapse above him.

When Michael Petroff and the little lawyer entered Engelhardt's room, after vainly knocking at the door for some time, they found him in bed, with his thin hairy hands lying helplessly on the coverlet. He was gazing directly upward, and indeed his eyes were rolled up so far that the whites showed, and he seemed to be looking fixedly at some special point in the ceiling. His face was of a somewhat yellowish tone and gave the impression of being made of porcelain, the skin was so smooth and the bones were so prominent. His forehead was uncommonly large in proportion to his small face and mouth, which was drawn together as if ready to whistle and was surrounded by many little lines centering at the lips. The shoemaker had wasted away so during the year that the collar of his bright colored shirt stood out a finger's breadth from his thin neck.

"Good morning!" said Michael Petroff gently and cheerfully. "Here are some friends to see you!" The lawyer remained timidly standing in the doorway.

Engelhardt did not answer. A shudder passed over him, and his thin hairy hands twitched from time to time, as if he were receiving an electric shock of varying strength.

Michael Petroff smiled and came toward him. "How are you, my dear friend?" said he softly and sympathetically, bending over Engelhardt. "Did the Doctor come to see you last night?"

Engelhardt rolled his head from side to side on the pillow. He was exhausted by a sleepless night and by the effects of the hypnotics that the Doctor had given him.

"Very ill!" answered he in a lifeless tone.

"Very ill?" Michael Petroff raised his eyebrows anxiously. He turned to the little lawyer, who still stood at the door. "Our poor friend does not feel well!" said he.

"Are you in pain?" Michael Petroff bent once more over the sick man and held his ear near Engelhardt's mouth.

"Yes," answered the sick man in a dull and lifeless tone, and murmured something in Petroff's ear. It sounded as if he were praying.

Michael Petroff straightened up again and glanced at the little lawyer. "He says that he has come to the end of his strength, our poor friend. He needs a new soul—like that time in the winter, when the attendant died, don't you remember?" And he shouted into the ear of the sufferer, unnecessarily loud: "I will speak with the Doctor, Friend Engelhardt. This is the Doctor's business. In one way or another he will get you a soul!"

But the little lawyer suddenly wrapped himself closer in his shawl. He was as cold as ice. Ordinarily very few impressions remained in his memory, but he still remembered clearly the death of the attendant Schwindt—and how Michael Petroff had come to his room and whispered mysteriously in his ear: "The attendant is dead. Engelhardt has taken his soul, don't you see!" So now he was horrified at the thought that Engelhardt might perhaps demand *his* soul, and there was nothing that he feared more than death.

Death dwelt in his confused sick brain as a figure that was invisible all but the hands. Suddenly, Oh so suddenly, it would stand near him, close by his side. And a horrible chill would stream forth from the dread form, and all the flowers, white with frost, would die, and the millions of swift little birds would fall frozen through the air, and he himself would be changed into a little heap of snow.

The lawyer drew in his head, so that his thin gray beard pushed out above his scarf, and gazed timidly at Michael Petroff with his little mouse-like eyes and shivered.

Michael Petroff looked at him in astonishment. "What is the matter, my dear fellow?" he drawled, smilingly. "Are you afraid? Why should you be, I wonder? I shall go at once to Dr. März and explain to him what Engelhardt requires. From what I know of him, he will not delay, and so everything will be attended to. I would gladly place my own soul at your disposal, Friend Engelhardt, but I still need it myself—I have a mission to fulfil, you know—I am Napoleon, and I fight a battle every day, I am—" But here he paused suddenly and listened.

"The Doctor is coming! Don't you hear him?" he whispered. "He will be here immediately—"

Dr. März had come into the ward. He could be heard speaking with some one in the corridor, and the three men in the shoemaker's room listened. The Doctor's voice was the only one which had the power to change the current of their thoughts and to give them hopes, great hopes, indefinite though they were. It affected them somewhat as a voice affects wanderers, who believe that they are lost in a solitary wilderness. And yet Dr. März did not talk much, but he had become a master of the art of listening, and would pay attention for hours every day to the complaints, the lamentations, and the hundreds of requests of his patients. But a few words from him had the power to encourage, to comfort, to cheer and to influence the mood of his patients for the whole day.

Suddenly the lawyer ceased to shiver, Michael Petroff began to laugh happily, and Engelhardt withdrew his gaze from the point in the ceiling and looked toward the half open door. He gazed so intently that his small bright eyes seemed to squint.

"Listen! The Rajah is talking with him!" said Michael Petroff, holding up his finger for silence.

"Nobody is watching you, my dear friend," said the Doctor's quiet voice.

And a deep and almost gentler voice replied: "I heard the watchman walking back and forth before my door all night, Sir. And I also heard the drum when the watch was relieved."

"My friend," answered the Doctor, "You must have been dreaming."

"No," continued the man whom Michael Petroff had called the "Rajah," "I excuse you, Sir, because I know that you are only doing your duty. But your tact ought to prevent you from carrying out your precautions in such an obvious way. I have given you my word of honor not to make any attempt to escape. I want you to tell that to the English government, by whose authority you are keeping me here in confinement. Neither have I any weapons concealed in my room. I want you to search it."

"I know that perfectly well, my friend!"

"All the same, I want you to search."

And the "Rajah" would not be satisfied until the Doctor had promised that his room should be searched immediately.

During this conversation Dr. März had appeared in the doorway, with the "Rajah" just behind him. Dr. März was a small man, dressed in a light-gray suit, with a ruddy beardless face and a quick, searching but gentle eye, while the "Rajah" stood behind him, tall and dark, and almost filling up the doorway. The "Rajah" had a long black beard and a fearless, dark brown face, in which the whites of his eyes showed strikingly.

The "Rajah" was simply a teacher, who had taught for a few years in India in a German school. A protracted fever had caused an incipient delusion, which, after his return to his native land, took entire possession of him. He imagined himself to be an Indian prince, who had been exiled by the English government.

He was extremely silent and reserved, and never talked with the other patients. His bearing expressed an inscrutable calm and an apparently quite natural pride.

For days together he would favor no one with a glance. He would walk up and down the garden, very slowly, gazing scornfully at the flowers and trees, and every evening, if the weather permitted, he would sit apart on a bench and gaze at the sinking sun, turning his dark face toward it until it disappeared. And as he gazed at the setting sun, an obscure, wistful sorrow glowed in his dark eyes. For he saw palm trees, that seemed to melt into the sun, so that only their tops showed, edged with flame, while their trunks were invisible—and elephants, stepping proudly, with their little brown *mahouts* upon their necks—and glittering golden temples, and crowds of dark, half naked natives, trotting along with branches in their hands, and uttering shrill cries—and then too, he saw himself, going on board the steamer that was to carry him into exile, while the dark people threw themselves down on the quay and wept. The "Rajah's" soul was filled with deep and bitter sorrow, and he rose and held his broad shoulders more erect, as if he were bearing a heavy burden. And he bore it! The "Rajah" never complained, never showed despondency, nor did he ever show any sign of what was taking place within him.

Even in his own room he behaved tranquilly. Very rarely was he heard to speak, and only once in a while—in his sleep—would he utter a long-drawn singing cry, such as street venders use in the Orient.

As Dr. März entered the room, the little baldheaded lawyer bowed, with his cap in his hand, and stood modestly against the wall. His gratitude knew no bounds, because the Doctor allowed him to live quietly and peacefully among his flowers and birds, without ever asking him to pay anything. So today he did not even venture to ask Dr. März for crumbs for the birds nor to complain of the negligence of the maids in the kitchen, although he had fully determined to do so.

But the lawyer could not look at the "Rajah" who stood dark and unapproachable in the passageway, without feel-

ing timid and slightly anxious. To express his respect, he bowed low to the "Rajah," and since the latter did not notice him, he bowed once more, moving his lips in a whisper. But the "Rajah" did not vouchsafe him a glance. For a moment the lawyer thought of approaching and kissing the "Rajah's" hand. For he recalled a circumstance that had been sharply impressed upon his memory: One evening he had met the "Rajah" in the corridor and had bowed to him. They had been quite alone. The "Rajah" had come toward him and had said in a deep, mysterious voice, "My loyal subject!" and had given him his hand to kiss. "Wait!" the "Rajah" had continued, "I will show my favor to you. I have very little of the treasure left, that I brought with me into exile, but —here, take this." And the "Rajah" had slipped a little gray stone into his hand.

Michael Petroff, on the contrary, looked smilingly and questioningly at Dr. März, while he stood politely back against the door. Meanwhile he tipped his head somewhat backward and sidewise and looked at the Doctor, as if he expected some very special news from him and as if he knew quite well that Dr. März had such news for him today. So confidently did he look at him, while a smile played about his pretty boyish mouth.

But Engelhardt, whose brows were drawn up with pain as if they were fastened with rivets, had half sat up in bed and was explaining his needs and his sufferings to the Doctor. He spoke in a guttural tone, rapidly, in a murmur that was hard to understand, and his voice sounded like the distant barking of a dog, heard on a still night.

He had come to the end of his strength—the moon was drawing at him!—in the night thousands of people had begged him on their knees not to give them up to destruction—only a new soul could give him back his strength—he felt that he was bending over more and more to the left and the whole universe might collapse at any moment: all this he muttered indistinctly, confusedly, his distressful eyes fixed pleadingly upon Dr. März.

Dr. März listened gravely, as did also Michael Petroff and even the "Rajah," who had stepped inside the door. And because they were all listening so earnestly—especially the "Rajah," whose large brilliant eyes were fixed upon Engelhardt—the little lawyer was once more seized with fear. He felt as if his legs were sinking through the floor, as if in a swamp, but just when this fear was about to overwhelm him like black darkness, a bird lit on the window-sill and chirped, and the lawyer seemed suddenly transformed.

"I am coming!" he whispered hurriedly.

"Don't go!" said Michael Petroff softly, taking hold of his arm. "Where are you going?"

"He was calling me!" answered the lawyer and slipped quickly away.

"How he is hurrying!" thought Michael Petroff, and heard himself laughing inwardly. And presently he said to Dr. März, laying his hand confidentially on his shoulder: "The lawyer is certainly a clever, well educated man—and yet he thinks that the birds call him! Between you and me, Doctor, hasn't it ever occurred to you, that he is not quite right—?"

After luncheon Dr. März's patients went out into the garden as usual. They trotted along in little groups, one after the other, round and round the biggest flower bed, at equal distances, silently, lost in thought. Only the "Inventor," a young man, sometimes paused, rested his hand on his side, put his other hand to his forehead and gazed steadily at a point on the ground.

The lawyer was watering his flowers and listening delightedly to the thousands and thousands of birds that were hopping in the bushes and treetops. Michael Petroff was in high good humor. There was news—! Just listen! Just listen! He was smoking a cigarette that Dr. März had given him, and was enjoying every whiff of it. He held the cigarette with his fingers coquettishly crossed, and

swung it in sweeping curves, as if he were taking off his hat to some one, and at every whiff he drew, he stood still and blew the smoke up into the sunny air and watched the blue cloud drift away. Everything gave him pleasure. Even walking was a delight to him. His steps were short, his knees sprung playfully; and he felt with delight how his toes crackled a little and how the elastic balls of his feet rebounded in his thin soled shoes from the ground, while his heels touched the path but lightly and his knees swung. When he stood still, he set the muscles of his thighs, by a certain pressure of the knees, and then enjoyed the firmness with which he stood there like a statue. He was convinced that nothing could have knocked him down. He walked along smiling and glancing cheerfully about him, as if to share his happiness. He greeted everyone, and whenever he met an acquaintance he would tell him the great event that had happened today.

"Just hear this, my friend!" he called out to the little lawyer, who was standing on the lawn, stooping over a tulip bed to water the flowers in the middle of it. "Do come over here! There is such news! Oh, please do come!"

He waited with friendly impatience until the lawyer had finished and came back to the path, meaning to go back to the well with his empty green can. "I want to tell you what has happened today," he began hastily, "His Majesty the king of Saxony has condescended—"

"Pardon me," the lawyer interrupted him in a whisper and started to leave him, "I am in a hurry. It is hot and the flowers are drying up."

"I will walk to the well with you," continued Michael Petroff good humoredly, and walked rapidly beside the departing lawyer. "I can tell you just as well while we are walking. So I said to the Doctor today: 'Now, Doctor, haven't you anything for me today?' 'No,' said he, 'my dear Captain, nothing at all, I am sorry to say.' 'Really nothing,' said I, and I took him by the arm. 'Has not

there been a single answer for weeks? Really nothing, Doctor?' He looked at me and thought a while. 'Oh yes,' he said, 'I had almost forgotten. A document did come for you. It is about that carpenter, you know, Captain.' 'A carpenter, Doctor? I don't remember'—so I took out my memorandum book, in which I enter all the documents that I send out: 'Where did the answer come from? From Saxony? Ah!' said I, 'then it must be about the butcher's apprentice who was condemned to death.' 'Yes,' said the Doctor, 'that is it. The fellow was a butcher's apprentice.' And now listen, my friend. Because of my petition, his Majesty the King of Saxony has condescended to pardon him. I must write a letter of thanks to His Majesty this very day."

"How the sun burns today," the lawyer responded to Michael Petroff's tale, and began to work the pump handle. "All the flowers look so wilted."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Michael Petroff. "You're not listening at all, are you?"

No, the lawyer was not listening. He was looking into his can to see if it was full.

Michael Petroff looked at him a while with his head on one side, then he laughed quietly to himself and walked rapidly away. He glanced about the garden in search of some one to whom he could tell his cheerful tale.

Just then he espied the "Rajah," who was walking up and down in the vegetable garden between two beds of lettuce. According to his habit, the "Rajah" was alone, and in a place where no one else would be apt to come.

Michael Petroff rose up on tiptoes and considered whether he had better, with one jump, spring over the beds, which separated him by about a hundred paces from the "Rajah." He would only have to soar upward a very little and he would be there. But he was afraid of being impolite to the "Rajah" or perhaps of startling him, so he gave up the idea.

The "Rajah" was pacing up and down with his usual

pride and dignity, but today he was restless and troubled. Engelhardt's words about preserving the equilibrium of the universe had taken possession of his mind. He had been considering the matter, and after long and inexorable reflection he had come to the decision that there was only one way — only one —

Just then Michael Petroff came up to him.

"Will you permit me to disturb you?" he asked politely, taking off his gray English traveling cap. "I am Captain Michael Petroff."

The "Rajah" gazed at him earnestly with his glowing dark eyes.

"What do you want," he asked quietly.

Michael Petroff smiled. "I want to tell you a piece of good news," he began. "This morning I said to the Doctor: 'Now, Doctor, haven't you anything for me today—?'"—And beaming with joy, he went on to tell the same story that he had told a dozen times that day.

The "Rajah" listened in silence, looking thoughtfully at Michael Petroff. Then he said: "I should like to have a word with you."

"I am quite at your service!"

The "Rajah's" eyes wandered over the garden slowly and with dignity.

"Shall we go over to that bench?"

"With pleasure."

The "Rajah" sat down, and with a condescending gesture invited Michael Petroff to be seated also.

"I see you writing all the time—" he began.

Michael Petroff lifted his cap. "Michael Petroff, Captain in the Russian army," he said politely.

The "Rajah" looked at him and went on, with his usual quiet pride: "Since you write, you must understand. And you surely must have gained knowledge of men and things from sacred books, which are closed to the rest of us, and you must have passed your life in meditation, according to the rules of your caste. Very well. Then explain to me

the words of the Fakir, who, according to the inscrutable decision of the Gods, is bearing up the universe on his shoulders. Speak!"

Michael Petroff smiled, highly flattered, and bowed to the "Rajah." He did not really understand all that the "Rajah" said, but he perceived that his words expressed respect and admiration. He felt that it was in some way his duty to confide to the "Rajah" the secret of his paper, but to his own surprise he asked: "You mean our friend Engelhardt?"

"You heard what he said?"

"Yes."

"Then speak!" It appeared that the "Rajah" had not forgotten a single word that Engelhardt had said to Dr. März. Michael Petroff, on the contrary, remembered almost nothing, and so fell into the "Rajah's" disfavor.

"Pardon me!" he apologized. "So many things pass through my head."

"But what will happen if he cannot get another soul?" asked the "Rajah."

"Oh, the Doctor will take care of that."

"Even Fakirs are only human. What will happen if his strength gives way? Will the world collapse?"

"Surely it will collapse!" replied Michael Petroff, laughing.

"What are you laughing at?" asked the "Rajah" quietly, while his dark eyes gleamed. "What will you do if it collapses?"

"I?" Michael Petroff smiled and pointed to the cottage, which showed dimly through the shrubbery. "If that house tumbles down," he went on, "I will run away as fast as I can, and go back to my own country. Russia is my native land. Do you know about Russia? You could hold Germany on the palm of your hand, but you couldn't carry Russia even on your back. My country is so big."

The "Rajah" considered this idea long and carefully. Then he said slowly, and as if speaking to himself: "If

the world collapses, will my kingdom be destroyed too? The mountains and the temples, the forests and the towns, will they all fall in ruins?"

Michael Petroff nodded, laughing maliciously. "I suppose so!"

And now the "Rajah" nodded too. He bowed his head slowly several times. "All my subjects would be destroyed?" he asked, and nodded. He rose and shook his head. "No," he said solemnly, gazing at Michael Petroff. "That must not be! We cannot allow it."

The "Rajah" turned away. Through the sunshine he walked, slowly and with dignity, back to the ward.

Michael Petroff looked after him. He smiled and shook his head. "What a curious being he is though!" said he, laughing. And when he heard his own laughter, he laughed again, loudly and gaily and snapped his fingers. Ha, ha, ha!

But the "Rajah" went to Engelhardt's room and informed him that he had decided to give up his own soul to him. "If the Gods deign to accept my sacrifice."

Engelhardt, who lay in his bed as if he were already dead, opened his eyes and looked at the "Rajah."

"Will you?" he gasped, while his hands and face twitched convulsively.

"Yes."

"I will try to hold out for three days yet!" gasped Engelhardt.

The "Rajah" closed the door. He went to his own room and wrote, in a large rapid hand that wandered in all directions, a short letter to Dr. März.

"Your Excellency," he wrote, "It is the will of Heaven. We shall see the blue river no more. We shall see no more the flooded rice fields, nor the white elephants with bands of gold upon their tusks. It is the will of Heaven and we obey. Say to the English Government that we are too noble for bitterness or revenge. Say to the English Government that we are pleased to rescue our subjects and to yield up our soul, if the sacrifice is pleasing to the Gods."

The "Rajah" rang for the attendant and gave him the letter, quietly and with great dignity. Then he undressed and went to bed, prepared to die.

At nightfall, when it was growing dark, the lawyer, much excited, rushed into Michael Petroff's room, without knocking, or waiting at the door, as he was in the habit of doing.

"Help me, Captain!" he whispered, and threw himself into the arms of the astonished Michael Petroff. The lawyer was trembling with fright.

"What in the world—?" exclaimed Michael Petroff, surprised and startled.

"He is standing in the corridor!" whispered the lawyer.

"Who? What is the matter with you?"

"Engelhardt! He is standing at the 'Rajah's' door. He is taking away his soul."

"What's that you say?" Michael Petroff laughed softly.

"I saw him standing there. Don't let him come near me. Oh good God!"

"Hush!" interrupted Michael Petroff. "I will attend to it."

The lawyer clung to his knees. "He will come in here! Oh my God, my God!"

"My dear friend," Michael Petroff reassured him, "control yourself. He shall not come in here. I promise you. But I must go and see!"

The little lawyer cowered on the floor and covered his face with his hands. But Michael Petroff left the room. After a while he came back, looking somewhat pale, but laughing to keep his courage up.

"Yes," he said in a low tone, "he is standing at the 'Rajah's' door listening. What makes you tremble so, my friend?"

"Don't leave me!" whispered the lawyer, still covering his face with his hands.

The "Rajah" lay motionless in his bed, gazing far, far

away with his great, brilliant eyes. His swarthy face was transfigured by a solemn peace and resignation. He declined to get up and refused all nourishment. Dr. März took his temperature and found it somewhat low, and his pulse rather slow, but he could not discover any symptoms of bodily disorder or of an approaching illness. With cheerful earnestness he advised the "Rajah" to get up and to eat, but as the "Rajah" did not answer, he left him in peace. He was accustomed to his patients' whims and knew that they went as suddenly as they came.

But Engelhardt, on the contrary, caused him great anxiety. In spite of long continued baths and all sorts of quieting treatments, he had passed another sleepless and excited night. He now lay in a sort of half sleep, and shrank and trembled with the effort that his horrible delusion required of him. He heard voices, the cries of millions of men, who wrung their hands and begged him not to give them up to destruction, he heard the ringing of bells, the chanting of processions, the prayers of emperors and kings, bishops and popes. His skin was dry and parched, his pulse was rapid and unsteady. Dr. März sat for a long time by his bedside watching him attentively, and sometimes, closing his eyes for a moment, he would recall with lightning rapidity all his knowledge and experience of such cases. At last, with a thoughtful and baffled air, he left Engelhardt.

But an hour later he was beside him again.

The patients in the ward showed that special form of nervousness that was always present whenever the frequent visits of the doctor indicated that some one was very ill. They walked quietly, spoke in undertones, and many of them refused to leave the room at all. The little lawyer hardly dared to stir and begged the thousands of birds, that lived in his room, to be very quiet, when he put their bread and water on the table. Again and again some unknown power drove him to look through the keyhole.

He would stand there a long time, covering his left eye with his hand as children do and peering with his right at the white wall of the corridor. But whenever a passer-by darkened his outlook, he would shrink back startled. If he had to go out to attend to his flowers, he opened the door slowly and silently and walked backward, fixing his eyes on Engelhardt's door, until he reached the steps. There he would turn quickly and hurry away, possessed by the fear that a hand would suddenly seize him by the coat collar.

Michael Petroff was the only one upon whom the general restlessness had no effect. He sat at his writing table, cut out his cases, numbered, registered, pasted, wrote. He shook his head smilingly over the little lawyer's terror, but promised him his protection in any case.

"Make your mind easy, my friend!" said he patronizingly. "So long as I am living, you have no cause for anxiety!" And with a pompous air he added: "I have been to see him. He told me that the "Rajah" had promised him his soul. Voilà tout. You may rely on Michael Petroff!"

"I thank you!" whispered the lawyer, and started to kiss Michael Petroff's hand.

"Oh no! Why should you?" said Michael Petroff, but he felt pleased and flattered.

The lawyer was calmer as he turned away. But in the night he heard Engelhardt crying out and crept under the bedclothes with his teeth chattering. It seemed to him as if he were buried in the ground, on a high mountain and he scarcely dared to breathe for fear. But just then he saw an enormous flock of birds flying swiftly over the sky in a gentle curve. He beckoned to them and called out: "Where are you going?"—"Come too, come too!" chirped the birds in answer. "To Vienna, to Vienna!" and they flew away in the distance. The lawyer gazed after them and fell asleep.

The "Rajah's" strength failed visibly, although artificial nourishment was given him, by Dr. März's orders. He was fading away as fast as twilight in the tropics. His brown face and hands had taken on a dull gray hue, like dry garden earth, and his broad and powerful chest rose and sank rapidly and silently under the bedclothes. His eyelids, which were paler than his face, drooped so as to half cover his eyes, but as soon as any one entered the room, they opened slowly, and his large, brilliant eyes rested questioningly on the newcomer.

His pulse was growing weak and rapid, and Dr. März sat almost constantly at the sick man's bedside. The rapid loss of strength was incomprehensible to the Doctor, and the inexplicable and rapid decline of the heart action caused especial anxiety. He sat there, closing his eyes from time to time, observed the patient, considered, tried all conceivable means — and by evening he knew that the "Rajah" was beyond all human aid.

"How is he, Doctor?" asked Michael Petroff, who had been watching for the Doctor in the corridor, and nodded his head toward the "Rajah's" door.

"Oh, not so badly off!" answered Dr. März absentmindedly.

Michael Petroff laughed softly behind his back. Then he went at once to the lawyer's room.

"The 'Rajah' is dying!" he said with a triumphant glance.

The lawyer looked up at him timidly; he did not answer.

"Yes!" Michael Petroff sat down in a cane-seated chair, and drew up his trousers a little, so as not to get them out of shape at the knees. "I asked the Doctor just now. He answered: 'Not so badly off.' Now that means that the 'Rajah' is dying. When Heinrich was dying, Heinrich who used to sing the jolly songs that you laughed at so, my friend, what did the Doctor say? 'Not so badly off!' And Heinrich died. Oh yes! I understand the doctors."

The little lawyer wrapped himself in his shawl. He was freezing.

"He is sucking the soul out of his body," continued Michael Petroff with an important air. "He understands his business, Engelhardt does. How did he manage with Schwindt, the attendant? The very same way, don't you see!"

And Michael Petroff left the room, rubbing his hands cheerfully. He was interested in everything that went on around him, in everything that he *saw through*. There was news — ! In the best of spirits, he sat down at his writing table to give the final touches to his article: "Doctor März arrested."

That very night, toward three o'clock, the "Rajah" died. It was a warm, still night and the moonlight was so bright that one could read out of doors. The patients were restless, they cleared their throats, walked up and down and talked together. But once in a while they would all be silent: that was when Engelhardt began to scream out. "I can't bear it any longer!" And then he would declaim aloud the petitions that kings and princes addressed to him on their knees.

The little lawyer had not dared to go to bed. He sat fully dressed on the sofa, with all his blankets wrapped around him. And yet he was so cold that his teeth chattered. Whenever Engelhardt began to cry out, he moved his lips in prayer and crossed himself.

Michael Petroff, on the contrary, had gone to bed with complete unconcern. He lay, with his arms under his head, and pondered over a suitable title for his next paper. For this time he would take the Doctor by surprise, he would catch him — just wait and see! What was the sense of a title like the *Non-Partisan*, if you please? Could one overcome this case-hardened Doctor with that? What? Oh, no, no. Surely not. The title must smell of fire and brimstone. It must be like the stroke of a sword, like the

muzzle of a gun aimed at the Doctor — for Dr. März must be startled when he reads the title! And after much reflection, Michael Petroff decided that this time he would call his paper *The Sword of the Archangel.* He could plainly see this Archangel sweeping obliquely forward, with terrible fluttering garments and an appalling and angry mien, holding his sword with both hands somewhat backward above his head. And this sword, that was as sharp as a razor and very broad at the back, slit the firmament open and a steaming bloodred stream appeared. This steaming red stream gave Michael Petroff a feeling of luxurious delight. He sat up and said: "Just wait! Ha, ha!"

But suddenly he covered his eyes with his hand. A dim, longing pain had come over him, and he could not tell why.

"Michael Petroff — ?" said he softly, "Michael Petroff — ?" and the tears sprung to his eyes. And so, with his hand over his wet eyes and a confused sorrow in his heart, he fell asleep.

He was sleeping soundly when he was awakened by a knock at his door: "It is I, the attendant, don't be startled."

"What is it?"

The attendant stepped in and said in an undertone: "Dr. März told me to ask you to come. The teacher wants to speak to you."

"The teacher?"

"The 'Rajah,' you know."

"You do not know what he wants of me?"

"No, Dr. März has sent for you."

"Very well, I will come."

Michael Petroff rose and made his toilet slowly and scrupulously. The attendant came back and begged him to hurry. Michael Petroff was tying his cravat carefully. "I am coming at once," said he impatiently, "but I can't make a call half dressed."

Finally he was ready; he looked in the glass a moment, stroked his moustache and stepped out.

"Oh Captain!" whispered the little lawyer through the crack of the door, for the knocking and talking in Petroff's room had made him still more anxious. "I beg you—!"

"I am in a hurry," answered Michael Petroff, and hastened along the corridor. As he passed Engelhardt's door he heard him declaiming: "We pray thee, do not destroy the dome of the world. Praised be thy name!" And with an altered, gasping voice Engelhardt went on: "I am struggling, I am struggling—!" In the room overhead a step went restlessly up and down, back and forth, like the distant throbbing of a machine.

Then the attendant opened the door of the "Rajah's" room and Michael Petroff stepped in.

"Good morning!" said he, loudly and cheerfully, as if it were broad daylight and as if the "Rajah" were not a dying man. "Good morning, Doctor. Here I am.—Good morning—Prince!" he added more softly after a glance at the "Rajah." "Michael Petroff, Captain in the Russian army."

The "Rajah's" appearance had greatly impressed Michael Petroff. The "Rajah" was sitting up in bed with his great dark eyes fixed upon him. A shaded electric light burned above his head, but in spite of the dim light the "Rajah's" face, framed by his dark hair and beard, shone like dull gold, yes, it positively shone. And it was this strange brightness which had so impressed Michael Petroff that he spoke more softly and addressed him as Prince. He had, in fact, never seriously considered who the "Rajah" really was. He was a Prince, who possessed a great kingdom somewhere and lived in exile. Now Michael Petroff believed all this without thinking very much about it. Yet at this moment he *understood* that the "Rajah" was a Prince, and he entirely altered his bearing toward him.

"You were pleased to send for me?" said he, with timid hesitation, and bowed.

The "Rajah" turned his face toward Dr. März.

"I thank you, Sir," he said, in a deep, quiet voice, whose tone had changed. "I know that you could have refused me this favor, since I am your prisoner."

"My dear friend"—answered the Doctor, but the "Rajah" paid no further attention to him.

"I sent for you," he said, turning to Michael Petroff, "in order that you may write down my last will and testament."

"I am at your disposal, "answered Michael Petroff, bowing slightly.

"Then write what I tell you."

Michael Petroff felt in his pockets confusedly. "I will run," said he, "I will be back at once"—and he left the room rapidly, to bring pencil and paper from his office.

"Michael Petroff—" whispered the little lawyer pleadingly. "You are leaving me—?"

"The 'Rajah' commands me!" answered Michael Petroff impatiently, and hurried past the trembling lawyer's little outstretched hands back to the dying man's room.

"Here I am, pardon me?" he stammered breathlessly.

"Then write!" said the "Rajah."

Michael seated himself properly and the "Rajah" began:

"We, Rajah of Mangalore, banished by the English Government, too noble to harbor feelings of revenge toward our enemies, since we are dying, in order to rescue our subjects, make known to our people:

"We greet you, our people! We greet the palm forests that shelter the temples of our ancestors! We greet the blue river that refreshes our land!"—

Michael Petroff, who was writing busily and industriously what the "Rajah" dictated, looked up as the "Rajah" paused. He saw that two great tears were falling from the "Rajah's" brilliant dark eyes. They ran down his thin but strangely glowing cheeks into his beard.

The "Rajah" raised his hand with a dignified gesture. Then he went on to the end calmly and majestically:

"We grant a universal amnesty! All our dungeons and prisons are to be opened and then burned to ashes. From this time forth no more blood shall be shed!"

"Oh, my Lord—my Prince—!" whispered Michael Petroff as he wrote.

"There shall no longer be an army in our land and no man shall go begging with his bowl. The treasure in our vaults shall be equally shared among our people. Neither castes nor classes shall exist from this time forth. All men shall be equal and all shall be brothers and sisters.

"The aged shall have their huts to die in, and to the children we bequeath the meadows to play in. To the sick we grant health, and to the unhappy sleep, quiet sleep. There shall be no more war and no more hatred between the peoples, whatever their color, for so we decree. The judges shall be wise and just, and to evil doers one must say: Go and be happy, for unhappiness causes evil doing.

"To mankind we grant the earth, that they may occupy the same, to the fish we give the waters and the sea, to the birds the heavens, and to the beasts the forests, and the meadows that lie hidden amongst them!

"But you, our own people, we bless and kiss you, for we are dying."

The "Rajah" raised his hands in benediction and sank back upon the pillows.

All who were present remained motionless and gazed at him. His chest rose and fell feebly and rapidly while his lids drooped over his eyes and showed like bright spots in his dark face.

Dr. März stepped gently to the bedside.

Just then the "Rajah" smiled. He threw his head back and opened his lips, as if he were going to sing. But only a thin, musical cry passed his lips, so high, so thin and so far away that it seemed as if the "Rajah" were already calling from some distant realm. It was the cry of the street venders in the Orient.

The "Rajah" was dead.

Michael Petroff stood on tiptoes and gazed with parted lips at the pale, mysteriously beautiful face that shone beneath the rich dark hair. He felt a sense of shame. He had lived so long with him who was now dead, without realizing who he was. He longed to kneel beside the dead man's bed and whisper: "Prince, my Prince!" But he did not dare to approach, he was afraid and stole out of the room.

After a while, when Dr. März stepped out into the corridor, he was impressed by the quiet that reigned in the ward. There was not a sound to be heard. The muffled tread overhead, that had paced back and forth for hours, was still. And Engelhardt had ceased crying and groaning.

Dr. März went to the shoemaker's door. All was as still as death within. He opened the door and listened. Engelhardt—was sleeping! His breathing was deep and regular . . . Dr. März shook his head and went thoughtfully out of the ward. On the steps leading to the garden he lit a cigar and turned up his coat collar. He was shivering.

So now he is asleep, thought he, as he walked through the moonlit garden, where the bushes cast long, pale shadows. Is there any discoverable connection between the teacher's death and Engelhardt's sleep? And he thought of one of his colleagues, who would invent a connection in any case, and then he thought how much he would enjoy a cup of strong coffee just now. Suddenly he paused, slightly startled. In the moonlight a little man, all wrapped up, was moving. It was the lawyer.

The little man had passed the whole night shivering and trembling in his dark room. But when the first cock crowed he had slipped out of the ward to water his flowers.

"Hush, hush!" he whispered to the thousands of little birds that began to chirp in the bushes as soon as he came near. "Sleep a bit longer, little ones!"

And while he was watering the flowers, he quite forgot the night, the "Rajah," and Engelhardt who needed another soul, and began to smile. "Good morning, my pets," he said softly, "here I am, I have come back to you."

But in Michael Petroff's room the light was burning.

Michael Petroff was sitting at his writing table, smiling and goodhumored, writing diligently. For the impression that the "Rajah's" death had made upon him had vanished as quickly as the tears that he had shed for him. He was now working on an article which he regarded as a marvelously important contribution for his newspaper. And this work brought back his happy cheerful spirits.

In the neatest characters he wrote:

"A telegram! The Rajah of Mangalore — against whose exile we have registered our telegraphic protest with the English Government — fell gently asleep tonight toward three o'clock. We had the honor to be present at his deathbed and to draw up the last will and testament of this great ruler. We will favor our readers with a copy:

"'We, Rajah of Mangalore, banished by the English Government, too noble to harbor feelings of revenge toward our enemies, since we are dying, in order to rescue our subjects, make known to our people . . .'"

Only as the sun rose did Michael Petroff lie down to rest.

THE CONTEMPORARY GERMAN DRAMA

By Amelia von Ende

A PERIOD of transition in a nation's life is not the best foundation upon which to rear a new literature. The change of religious, moral, social and political standards from their well-established and time-honored base to new and untried planes does not favor the development of minds, well-defined and well-balanced, and of characters, able to translate a clear purpose into consistent achievement.

Germany passed through such a change toward the end of the nineteenth century. The unification of the Empire with its era of material prosperity and progress strengthened the roots of national consciousness; the gospel of the superman with its absolute ego-cult stimulated individual self-assertion; the wave of altruism which swept across the world at the same time roused the slumbering sense of social responsibility. These three forces—national consciousness, individual self assertion, social responsibility—profoundly affected the character of the young generation growing up in the newly reëstablished Empire. Embracing each of these principles in turn, theorizing about them, the young men and women of the time became unsettled. With the gradual realization of the seriousness of the underlying ideas grew the desire to experiment with them in life, to prove them by practice. In the attempt to live these new ideals the individual became involved in a conflict with the old conscience that no philosophy had yet been able to argue away, and the road out of this dilemma lay along the line of least resistance, which consisted in drifting with the changing tides. The result was the gradual evolution of a type of hero which modified the drama of the country. While the hero of old encountered and conquered obstacles mainly of external circumstance and complication, the

hero of the present is the victim of doubts and moods rooted within himself, defeating his purpose and paralyzing his will.

The modern German drama deals with these conditions and characters. The writers whose creative instinct awoke in the seventies stood upon the firm ground of old traditions and were inspired by the optimism of the national renascence. The writers who responded to the same instinct in the eighties stood on the plane of a philosophy which had undermined the old traditions and conventions and had not yet crystallized into constructive principles that could safely guide the individual through life. Their souls wavered between self-realization and self-renunciation; their minds eagerly followed the example of Ibsen inquiring into individual motives and responsibilities, and their eyes were at the same time opened to the economic struggle of the masses which had roused the social conscience. A world unknown to the poets of the previous generation, or ignored by them, had come within the range of vision; it engaged not only the humanitarian's sympathy and the philosopher's speculation, but the artist's interest. It was studied for its scientific meaning and exploited for its esthetic possibilities.

The floodgates of a literature rich in stimulating ideas were opened and the new subject-matter demanded a new manner, a new style. The influence of Darwin was not lost upon the young generation. The significance of circumstance and environment in the making of man led to a minute painting of the *milieu*, of the external setting of each individual life at every moment of its existence in drama or fiction. The language of the characters became the language of their class in ordinary life. The action was immediately and directly transferred to the written page and became a record of unadorned reality. The cry for truth became one of the party cries of the period. Naturalistic fiction and naturalistic drama came into being.

Within the brief space of less than twenty-five years were

born three men whose literary personalities represent this development of German drama. Ernst von Wildenbruch in the main held fast to the traditions of the past, which he treated in historical plays in the manner of a poet who had matured in the period of Germany's unification and was inspired with the consciousness of national renascence. Hermann Sudermann, who rose on the horizon just as the old traditions began to weaken, chose to ignore the past, took his cue from the social note of the present, but sought a compromise with the old forms and with the taste of the great mass of the people. Gerhart Hauptmann, the youngest of the three, discarded all precedent and built upon new foundations with new material in a new manner. By the success which he gained in spite of his uncompromising attitude, he became the leader of the young generation.

The intellectual atmosphere in the decade that witnessed the advent of Sudermann and Hauptmann was extraordinarily alive and stimulating and the drama was chosen by an amazing number of young aspirants to literary fame as the vehicle of the message they had for the world. The plays of the period suggest the fermentation going on in the young brains, the unsettling of old and the dawn of new creeds, religious, social and esthetic. The clash of two generations became one of the most popular themes. Cæsar Flaischlen, a Suabian, handled it most thoughtfully and effectively in *Martin Lehnhardt.* Though the author modestly called it "dramatic scenes," it was a play presenting with spirited rhythm a phase of the spiritual revolution and moral revaluation then taking place, and in the orthodox uncle and the radical nephew he created two figures full of real dramatic life. The well-to-do and well-satisfied middle-class with its somewhat shopworn ideals was a popular topic with these young men who lustily set about to demolish the Mosaic and other codes of life. Otto Erich Hartleben was hailed as the Juvenal of the society of his time, flaying it mercilessly in satirical comedies like *Education for Marriage, The Moral Requirement,* and *Rose-Monday.*

Whatever were the shortcomings of these young hotspurs, there is no doubt that there were among them earnest seekers for new values of life and letters. Many were contented with pathetic seriousness and doubtful results to imitate their successful and popular model, Gerhart Hauptmann. Some made no attempt at concealing that they walked closely in the footsteps of their master. Nor did the critics of the new school esteem them any less for being followers and imitators rather than creators of independent merit. Among these youths, Georg Hirschfeld, a born Berliner, was the most promising. He was of a type abundant in every metropolis having an intense intellectual life: sensitive, impressionable, with an amazing talent for absorption and adaptation and a facile gift of language. The reception accorded to his drama, *The Mothers* (1896), which was frankly reminiscent of Sudermann's contrast between the front and the rear house and of Hauptmann's dialogue of real life, was so generous, that it gave the author, then barely twenty-three, a position quite out of proportion to his achievement. His efforts at following up the easily won success made him a pathetic figure in the drama of that decade. He experienced failure upon failure and has now, after the publication of some stories of varying merit and the stage success of a clever comedy directed against the esthetes—*Mieze and Maria*—once more dropped out of sight.

A far more robust figure came to the fore in Max Halbe, a West Prussian and an individuality deeply rooted in the soil of his forefathers. That soil and his close kinship with nature gave Halbe a firmer foundation than the shifting quicksands of metropolitan life offered. These were the premises upon which he set out to build. But he would not have been a child of his time had he not seen life through the temperament of his generation. With all his sturdy mental and moral fibre he could not withstand the torrential current of skepticism and revaluation that swept through the intellectual world and uprooted its spiritual

mainstays. Though the action of his plays was based upon eternal conflicts of the human tragi-comedy — the irreconcilable contrast between two generations, between two orders of life, between love and duty — his characters are of the new type, his unheroic heroes are like the men he saw about him, reeds swayed by the breath of the Zeitgeist, and true to the naturalistic creed of his generation they were represented by him without any attempt at idealization.

Halbe made his début in 1889 with the tragedy of a peasant parvenu. The play was fashioned according to old formulas, but of charming local color and with more than a touch of the new type in one of the characters. This was followed in 1890 by *Free Love,* the hero of which is one of those individuals unable to reconcile their convictions with their actions — a conflict which becomes a source of torture to themselves and those about them. *The Ice-Floe* (1892) was a powerful drama, in which the sudden thaw, destroying what has been, but bringing with it a breath of the spring and the new life to come, admirably symbolized the passing of the old order. But it was not until the following year, which saw the publication of his *Youth,* that Halbe attracted serious attention outside of the circles of that Young Germany which has become identified with the literary revolution. *Youth* was of a human significance and of an artistic calibre which could not well be ignored. This work presented the old theme of youth, love and sin in the provincial setting that he knew so well; the characters were taken from real life and portrayed with striking truthfulness. But over it all was the atmosphere of spring, of sunshine and blossoms and thundershowers that quicken the germs in the womb of the earth. This was suggested with a delicacy and a chastity rare in the literature of that period of storm and stress. *Youth* was the work of a true poet and would have been hailed as such even had the author been born into a period less generous in its bestowal of praise upon the works of the "coming men."

In *Mother Earth*, published in 1897, Max Halbe shows himself at his best both in spirit and in manner. The hero of that play is estranged from his paternal hearth with its ancestral traditions and from the simple rural life and the innocent tender love of his youth. For he has gone to Berlin, has drifted into the circles of the intellectuals, married the brilliant and advanced daughter of a professor and become actively interested in feminist propaganda. Subconsciously, however, this life does not satisfy him, and when on the death of his father he returns to the old home and feels once more its charm, he realizes that he has forfeited real happiness for a vague and alien ideal. In this work with its firmly knit and logically evolved action Max Halbe reached a climax in his development. Since its production his star has been steadily declining and the thirteen or more works that have since come from his pen have not added to his reputation. Embittered by his failures, he chose some years ago to attack his rivals and critics in a satirical comedy. *The Isle of the Blessed*, but he had miscalculated the effect of the poorly disguised personal animosities upon an audience not sufficiently interested in the author's friendships and enmities. He has, however, not become sadly resigned to his fate, like Hirschfeld, but continues to court the favor of the stage with the tenacity of a man dispointed in his hopes but unwilling to admit his defeat.

An important aspect of the social and esthetic programme of the new school was the unflinching frankness with which it faced a problem belonging to intimate life and barring public discussion, yet closely connected with the economic conditions of society: the problem of sex. The curious revival of pagan eroticism in lyric poetry and the growing tendency toward a scientific cynicism in fiction were supplemented by attempts to handle sex from the standpoint of modern psychology and social ethics in drama. With works of that class has the name of Frank Wedekind become inseparably associated. He is the most positive intellect among the writers of Young Germany and

their most radical innovator in regard to form. He is a fanatic of truth and deals only with facts; discarding the mitigating accessories of the *milieu*, he places those facts before us in absolute nudity. This would make him the most consistent naturalist; but when facts are presented bald and bare, they do not make the impression of reality, but rather of grotesque caricature. Hence Wedekind has sometimes been compared with early English dramatists and classed with romanticists like Lenz, Grabbe and Heine. He himself has no esthetic theories whatever that could facilitate his being enrolled under some fetching label. Nor has he any ethical principles, some critics allege, if they do not curtly call him immoral. Yet his work, from the appearance of *Spring's Awakening* (1891) to his *Stone of Wisdom* (1909) and his most recent works, proves him to be concerned with nothing but the moral problem. He treats social morality with mordant irony from an a-moral standpoint. The distinction between a-moral and immoral must be borne in mind in any attempt to interpret the puzzling and paradoxical personality of the author and to arrive at an approximate understanding of the man behind his work.

That Wedekind is not only an author, but an actor as well, has in no small degree complicated his case. The pose seems so inseparably connected with the art of the actor, that his intransigent policy in sex matters and his striking impersonations of the characters in his plays have been interpreted as the unabashed bid for notoriety of a clever poseur. But his acting could hardly have made palatable to theatre audiences topics tabooed in polite conversation and with appalling candor presented by him on the stage. Neither his quality as actor nor his quality as author could account for the measure of popularity his plays have attained. It would rather indicate that the German public was ready for open discussion of the problems involved and that Wedekind's frankness and honesty, his lapses into diabolical grimace and grotesque hyperbole

IN THE SHADE

LEO PUTZ

herself before his eyes, is a typical product of his manner, and a grotesque satire upon the cult of histrionic stars practised by both sexes.

While the initiative in the literary revolution of which Halbe and Wedekind are such striking examples was taken by Northern Germany and centred in Berlin, Austria was not slow in adding a note of its own by giving the German drama of the period two of its most interesting individualities. Both Arthur Schnitzler and Hugo von Hofmannsthal — to whom might be added the clever and versatile Hermann Bahr — reflect the complex soul of their native city, Vienna; for if Austria is acknowledged to be a most curious racial composite, Vienna contains its very essence. Situated at the parting of the ways for the South and the Orient, it has ever been a much-coveted spot. After the conquest of the original Celtic settlement by the Romans, Teutons, Huns, and Turks have successively fought for its possession and have left their imprint upon its physiognomy. Intermarriage with the neighboring Czechs and Magyars, the affiliations of the court with Spain, Italy, and France, and the final permeation of all social strata by the Hebrew element, have produced what may be called the Viennese soul. Political conditions, too, have influenced it: to maintain peace in a country which is a heterogeneous conglomerate of states rather than an organic growth, requires a diplomacy the chief aim of which is to prevent anything from happening. This attitude of the Viennese court and its vast machinery of functionaries slowly affected other classes, until the people of Vienna as a body seem to refrain from anything that means action. It is this passive fatalism which has hampered the intellectual development of Vienna. Oldest in culture among the German-speaking cities of Europe it has never been and is not likely ever to be a leader.

Minds that entered upon this local heritage were only too ready to receive the seeds of skepticism abundant in the spiritual atmosphere of the century's end. But Nietzsche's

gospel of the Superman, Ibsen's heretical analysis of human motives and Zola's cry for truth did not affect the young generation of Vienna intellectuals as they did those of Paris or Berlin, where the revision of old standards of life and letters was promptly followed by daring experiments with new ideals. Young Vienna heard the keynotes of the new time, but it was content to evolve a new variety of an old tune. Time-honored pessimism, world-sorrow, gave way to a sophisticated and cynical world-weariness which is symptomatic of decadence. Widely different as their individualities present themselves, between the pages of their books and on the stage, both Schnitzler and Hofmannsthal reflect that attitude of mind.

In the work of Arthur Schnitzler the Hebrew element predominates; it has quickened the somewhat inert Vienna blood and finds expression in analytical keenness and sharpness of vision, a wit of Gallic refinement and a language of sparkling brilliancy. Schnitzler's profession, too, has not been without some influence upon his poetical work. A physician facing humanity daily not in strength and health, but in weakness and disease, cannot divest himself of a certain pessimistic bias. Brought up and practising in a city like Vienna, he cannot escape the cynicism which belongs alike to the man of the world as to the doctor before whom all veils and pretenses are discarded. It is difficult, indeed, to banish the idea that the consultation-room of Arthur Schnitzler, Dr. med., is the confessional which furnishes material to Arthur Schnitzler, author. For the modern physician is not concerned with his patient's body only, but also with his soul. He must be a psychologist as well, and the success of his diagnosis depends upon his skill to unravel the intricate interrelations between both. That Schnitzler is such a physician admits of no doubt. His perspicacity as diagnostician lends subtlety to his analysis and portrayal of characters. While his professional bias may in a

manner limit the range of his vision, his professional knowledge and experience are strong assets of the dramatist Schnitzler.

The world that he knows best is the modern society of Vienna. His heroes are mostly men engaged in a quest for the joys of life, but never attaining whole-hearted enjoyment, because of their innate streak of world-weariness. When the hero of his *Anatol* (1893) calls himself "light-hearted pessimist," Schnitzler creates a term which fits as well his Fedor in *Märchen* (1894), his Fritz in *Liebelei* (1895), and other specimens of a type related to the heroes of Musset and other Frenchmen. His women, too, have a streak of French blood, both his "sweet girls" and his married heroines; but unmistakably Austrian and Viennese is their willingness to resign rather than to resist. Frau Gabriele give Anatol flowers to take to his sweetheart and bids him tell her: "These flowers, my . . . sweet girl . . . a woman sends you, who can perhaps love as well as you, but had not the courage . . ." The playlets collectively called *Anatol* are only scenes and dialogues between two men or a man and a woman exchanging confidences. Limited as he seems in his choice of themes and types, both by temperament and association, it is amazing with what virtuosity Schnitzler varies almost identical situations and characters until they are differentiated from one another by some striking individual touch and when presented on the stage act with a new and potent charm.

For that just balance of contents and form which makes for perfection, Schnitzler's renaissance drama *The Veil of Beatrice* is the most noteworthy specimen. But in all his work his style is his greatest achievement. It is of a rare spontaneity, vivacity and grace—qualities that make his dialogue appear an impromptu performance rather than a carefully planned structure. It abounds in paradoxes that do not blind the vision, but reveal vistas, and that do not impress as high lights added for effect, but as organic parts of the whole. It scintillates with wit, though it lacks

humor. It is the just medium of expression for his characters, those types of modern intellectuals, affected by the corrosive skepticism of the period and in turn buoyed by the light-hearted temperament and depressed by the passive melancholy that are indigenous to Vienna. It is this literary excellence that renders works like *Literature* (1902) and *The Green Cockatoo* (1899) enjoyable to readers to whom their spirit may be absolutely foreign. It is their polish that robs their cynicism of its sting and brings into relief only their formal beauty. *Literature* deals effectively with the literary exploitation of intimate personal experience: it presents characters which with due local modification can be found in every intellectual centre and is a little masterpiece of irony. In *The Green Cockatoo* the poet has seen his theme in a sort of phantasmagorical perspective; he plays with reality and appearance in a play within a play which is unique in literature. He makes his spectators feel the hot breath of the French Revolution without burdening them with the ideas that were back of it. It is the most solidly constructed of his works and the one most sure of success on any stage. Exquisite as is the art of Schnitzler, it is deeply rooted in life and does not approach that art for art's sake which was one of the striking phenomena of that period.

Yet the atmosphere of Vienna and the leisurely pace of its life seem to favor the development of an art that has little or no connection with the pressing realities of the day and is bent upon seeking the beauty of the word rather than the truth of its message. Such a movement had been inaugurated in German letters in 1890 by Stefan George, who gathered about him a small group of collaborators in the privately circulated magazine *Blätter für die Kunst.* It stood for a remoteness from reality which formed a strong contrast to the naturalistic creed and for a formal craftsmanship which set out to counteract the growing tendency to break away from the fetters of conventional forms. The work of the group bordered often upon archaic preciosity,

yet its influence was wholesome in holding up the ideal of a formalism which is after all one of the basic conditions of art. Though not a native of Vienna, Stefan George settled there after launching the movement and found among its young intellectuals not a few disciples that have since followed in his wake. There is something about an art for art's sake that appeals to an aristocracy of birth and breeding; it touched a responsive chord in the soul of Hugo von Hofmannsthal,* whose earlier work distinctly shows its influence and who to that influence still owes his admirable mastery of form.

Hofmannsthal's descent from an old nobility that had passed the zenith of its power and was but little modified by a strain of the more democratic Hebrew blood, seemed to predestine him for the part he has played in the literature of the present. He made his début as a mere youth of seventeen, when in 1891 he published the dramatic study *Yesterday*, giving evidence of an amazingly precocious mind and a prematurely developed formal talent. Gifted writers of that kind are usually doomed to remain prodigies whatever may be their medium of expression. Coming into their heritage, which is the accumulated knowledge and experience of their ancestors, before they have acquired a direct and profound grasp of life, they seem to enter the world full-fledged, while it is only that ancestral heritage that works through the impressions of the youthful brain and gives them the color of age. Knowing and satiated when the mind is most receptive, such individualities rarely develop beyond their first brilliant phase. Hugo von Hofmannsthal was for a long time considered a perfect specimen of that type. For the hero of that first work, as of every work published by him during the first decade of his career, was his double, was Hofmannsthal himself. All the virtuosity of style could not conceal the paucity of invention in subject matter and in the creation

*For Hofmannsthal, compare Vol. XVII, pp. 482–527.

of real living characters. Even in that charming Oriental play *The Marriage of Sobeide* (1899) and *The Mine of Falun* (1906) the personality of the author obtrudes itself upon the vision of the reader.

These works, however, marked a transition. For with his thirtieth year Hofmannsthal entered upon a new period and a new manner. The study of the antique Greek drama and of early English dramatists diverted him from the self-absorption and self-reflection of his previous work, and may have brought home to him the necessity of finding a more fertile source for his art than his own individual soul. The extraordinary success of Wilde's *Salome* opened possibilities of applying the pathological knowledge of the present to the interpretation of the past. He chose for this momentous departure the *Electra* of Sophocles (1903). Taking from the Greek poet the mere skeleton of the story, he modified the characters according to his own vision and the psychopathic viewpoint of the time—a liberty which some critics justified, others branded as an unpardonable license. But the work was a turning-point for Hofmannsthal, for he has since begun to face life more directly and squarely and though he has not reached a wholesome reading of it, he has at least struck new and powerful notes that contrast strongly with the spirit of his previous works. Enforced by the music of Richard Strauss, whose naturalism is the immediate expression of his robust virility, Hofmannsthal's *Electra* has made the name of the author known throughout the world. To his association with the sturdy Bavarian composer is also due the comedy *Der Rosenkavalier* (1911), which with its daring situations and touches of drastic burlesque harks back to the spirit of the comedy of Molière's time, though in its way it is also a product of the reaction against the puerile and commonplace inoffensiveness of mid-century letters inaugurated by Young Germany. Since his association with Richard Strauss has weaned Hofmannsthal from the somewhat effete estheticism and pessimism of his youth,

it is a matter of interesting conjecture what further effect it may have upon his development.

It seems to follow with the inevitableness of a physical law, that the alternate swing of the pendulum between a naturalism which set above everything the material fact and the cry for truth, and a subtle estheticism which set the word above the spirit, would in the end usher in an art that had profited by and learned to avoid both extremes. There was little surprise when the Royal Schiller prize, which had not been awarded for some years, was in 1908 divided between Karl Schönherr* for his play *Erde* and Ernst Hardt for *Tristram the Jester*. For Schönherr, the Tyrolese, had drawn his inspiration from the source which ever Antæus-like renews the strength of humanity, and Hardt had drawn upon the rich source of racial lore. But when a jury consisting of men like Dr. Jacob Minor, Dr. Paul Schlenther, Hermann Sudermann, Carl Hauptmann and others within a few weeks after that contest awarded the popular Schiller prize also to Hardt and for the same play, with a competitor like Hofmannsthal in the race, it seemed safe to argue that this unanimity indicated a turn of the tide. Both Schönherr and Hardt stand for that sane eclecticism which seems destined to pilot German drama out of the contrary currents to which it has long been a prey toward a type more in harmony with the classical ideal.

Though comparatively unknown when he issued as victor from those contests and suddenly obtained a measure of celebrity, Hardt was by no means a novice in the world of letters. The first book bearing his name, *Priests of Death* (1898), contained some stories of an epic dignity and a dramatic rhythm that challenged attention and secured interest for the works that followed. These were another volume of fiction, one of poetry, some plays and a number of translations from Taine, Flaubert, Balzac, and other

*For Schönherr, compare Vol. XVI, pp. 410–479.

French writers, which are remarkable specimens of his ability to grasp the spirit of a foreign world and to convey its essence through the medium of his native tongue. It seems natural that his familiarity with French literature had some influence upon the character of his prize drama, since he had chosen for its topic a story belonging alike to German and Gallic lore. To re-create the story of Tristan and Isolde upon the foundation of the German source would have challenged comparison not only with the cherished epic of Master Gottfried of Strassburg, but also with the music-drama of Richard Wagner, who had treated it with something like finality,—at least for the present generation. By going back to the old French legend and to J. Bédier's book *Le roman de Tristan et Yseult* (1900), the author was able to present that most tragic of all love-stories from a different angle. By complicating the plot through the introduction of the second Isolde, jealousy became the secondary, though hardly less powerful theme. This deviation from the comparatively simple plot of the German story is of course more difficult of comprehension upon the stage. It is not easy to convince an audience that jealousy of Isolde White-hand, whom Tristan had married after being banished from Cornwall, blinds Isolde Blond-hair into refusing to recognize him when he returns and pleads his case before her in the disguise of Tristram the Jester. Cavilling critics were quick to discover and to expatiate upon this weakness of the play. But the fine lines upon which it is built and the plastic figures standing out against the medieval background, the glowing color, radiant lights and brooding shadows of its atmosphere, and lastly, the language, the verse-form admirably adapted to the subject,—all this together makes of the drama a work coming very near that perfect balance of contents and form which is the ideal of art.

It is a rather circuitous path which German drama has traveled since the memorable performance of Gerhart

Hauptmann's play *Before Sunrise* in 1889. It has outgrown the one-sided naturalism which had seemed the only medium of translating life directly into literature. It has turned aside from the orphic symbolism and verbal artistry rooted only in literature and having nothing in common with life. Men like Karl Schönherr, Carl Hauptmann, and others have found in the native soil and its people and in the problems that confront that people at all times as rich a source of thematic material as previous generations of poets had found in the historic past. Men like Ernst Hardt and others have infused new life into the old legends of racial lore. As German drama is completing this cycle of its development it gives hopeful evidence of returning to the safe middle course of normal growth toward a new type, indigenous to the soil and the soul of the country.

MAX HALBE

MOTHER EARTH

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

WARKENTIN, *publisher of a feminist journal*
WARKENTIN-BERNHARDY, *his wife*
N GLYSZLNSKI
OR VON LASKOWSKI, *owner of the estate Klonowken*
NETTE, *his wife*
CLARA
EDEMANN, *estate owner*
ON TIEDEMANN
, SENIOR, *estate owner*
ASE, *estate owner*
SCHNAASE
, JUNIOR, *student*
DENSTEIN, *physician*
NS, *manager of a factory*
EIT, *rentier*
BOROWSKI, *widow of a teacher*
, *organist*
CK, *licentiate*
, *inspector*
chambermaid
coachman

Time: The present. *Place: Estate Ellernhof.*

MOTHER EARTH (1897)

A Drama in Five Acts

TRANSLATED BY PAUL H. GRUMMANN, A.M.

Professor of Modern German Literature, University of Nebraska

ACT I

Ancient hall of the manor. Broad and spacious. Low ceiling. In the rear wall, toward the garden, the bare trees of which are visible, three wide windows with white crossbars. Chair at both ends of each window. A folding card table between the chairs of the middle window. An Empire commode in each space between the windows. In the centre of the two lateral walls, folding doors, the one at the left leading into another room, the one at the right into the vestibule. On the left, in the foreground, a sofa which is well preserved and gives evidence of former elegance, and similar chairs with stiff backs and light variegated covers, grouped around a large oval table. Opposite this in the foreground at the right, an old-fashioned fireplace, before which three similar chairs are placed. In the background at the right, near the window, a spinet with a chair before it. In the corresponding place on the left near the window a tall, gilt framed mirror resting on a cabinet base. An old fashioned chandelier, ornate with gilt and glass, is suspended in the centre of the hall. A number of pictures, men and women in the fashions of the last one hundred years, cover the walls. Painted board floor. Rugs only before sofa and spinet. Furniture in light mahogany. Wall paper of gilt design. Solid, but faded finery of the twenties and thirties of the nineteenth century with a few more recent additions. The general character of the hall is bright and inviting, nevertheless serious and somewhat shut in by the low ceiling, giving the large room an air of emptiness, for the scant furniture along the walls seems to be lost. A mixture of a dancing hall and an ancestral portrait gallery. At present it looks gloomy, almost spectral. It is an early morning near the end of December. As yet not a ray of sunlight comes in through the heart-shaped apertures of the shutters, which are hung on the outside and are fastened on the inside by means of thumbscrews. A lamp stands at the extreme end of the room on one of the commodes. Beyond

its radius deep shadows gather on every side. In the foreground logs are burning brightly in the fireplace. An indistinct light falls past the chairs over the foreground. From the other side, the light of a candle falls upon the sofa table which is covered with a white cloth. It also illumines only the immediate vicinity. Dusk predominates in the spacious hall. At every passing and repassing great shadows flit back and forth.

AUNT CLARA *stands on a chair under the chandelier and slowly revolves it, scrutinizing it, and causing the glass prisms to tinkle.*

INSPECTOR ZINDEL *in a fur coat and cap stands at the door on the right and is about to go out.*

UNT CLARA (*with a heavy gray cloth wrapped about her head, speaks down from the chair*). Yes, just go and see, Zindel, whether they are coming; see whether you can hear anything.

INSPECTOR ZINDEL. Just so, Miss. I shall be back right off. (*He opens the door and runs into* LENE, *who is about to enter with a tray full of dishes for the morning coffee.*) Whoa! Look out! Don't knock anything over! (*Partly to himself.*) Or the old man will play us the trick and wake up again. (*He goes out, and closes the door behind him.*)

AUNT CLARA (*speaking down from the chair*). Is it you, Lene?

LENE (*has come forward with the dishes, shrinks so that the tray and dishes clatter*). Heavens and all the saints! Why, I didn't see you at all, Miss! Why, I was so frightened! (*She draws several deep breaths, places the tray beside the candle on the white cloth of the sofa table, and begins to arrange the cups.*)

AUNT CLARA (*as before*). Why in the world are you frightened? You see, don't you, that I am attending to the chandelier, am doing your work again?

LENE (*busy at the table*). Expect a person not to get scared, when all of a sudden a voice like that comes out of the dark, when, on top of it all, a dead man's in the

INSPECTOR ZINDEL. Especially now that the old master is dead, and the young master doesn't know about things, all of the work is on a fellow's shoulders, you see.

AUNT CLARA (*still listening*). Don't you hear something, Zindel? It seems to me?

INSPECTOR ZINDEL (*is startled and listens also*). Where, pray tell? . . . [*Brief silence.*]

AUNT CLARA (*taking her hand from her ear*). No, nothing. It only seemed to me. . . .

INSPECTOR ZINDEL. Heavens, Miss Clara! . . . Where was it—? (*He walks up and down restlessly.*)

AUNT CLARA (*has sat down in a chair at the table before the sofa*). Now they may be here at any time. What time is it, Zindel?

INSPECTOR ZINDEL. Almost seven, Miss. The Berlin train arrives at ten minutes after six.

AUNT CLARA. You were outside, Zindel, weren't you; didn't you hear a carriage on the road?

INSPECTOR ZINDEL (*warms his hands at the fireplace*). The wind's from the other way, Miss. One can hear nothing. And it's cold as the deuce! They'll be nice and cold on the way.

AUNT CLARA. I do not know how it comes, but the day seems unwilling to break this morning. How does it look outside?

INSPECTOR ZINDEL. Dark, pitch dark. Not a star, nothing. Only over toward the Sobbowitz woods, it's beginning to dawn a bit.

AUNT CLARA (*yawning*). Of course, that's where the sun must rise.

INSPECTOR ZINDEL (*also yawning*). We'll not get much of a peep at it today. It's going to be a gloomy day.

AUNT CLARA. Possibly it will snow.

INSPECTOR ZINDEL. May be, why it's time. Christmas without snow, I can't remember such a thing for the last few years.

AUNT CLARA. No night has ever turned out as long as the present one for me. I haven't closed an eye. I

heard the clock strike every time. And all the things that I saw and heard!

INSPECTOR ZINDEL (*approaching again*). Don't tell it, Miss!

AUNT CLARA. I continually saw the dead man, but he was alive and opened the door and came toward me. And yet I knew he was dead. And when I was about to scream, the clock struck and all was gone.

[*Outside a clock strikes. It has the silvery sound of old chimes. Both are startled.*]

INSPECTOR ZINDEL. Thunderation! You *can* put it over a fellow. (*He goes back to the fireplace.*)

AUNT CLARA (*counts the strokes, first in an undertone, then louder, and meanwhile rises*). Five . . . six . . . seven . . . It has struck seven, Zindel. They will surely be here any moment. (*She listens again.*) I believe I hear something now.

INSPECTOR ZINDEL (*at the fireplace, seizes the lantern*). Here they are. You can hear the carriage on the road.

AUNT CLARA (*busily*). After all they came sooner than we expected! Hurry, Zindel, they are driving up now.

INSPECTOR ZINDEL (*already at the door on the right, swinging the lantern*). This minute, Miss Clara . . . !

[*Goes off.*]

AUNT CLARA (*also on the way to the door, stops a moment and folds her hands*). If he really *is* here, praise and thanks to God!

LENE (*appears in the door at the right*). They are coming, Miss Clara, they are coming!

AUNT CLARA (*busy again*). Why are you still there? Out with you and help the guests take off their wraps!

LENE. Why, I'm doing that very thing, Miss!

[*Goes off.*]

AUNT CLARA (*calling after her*). And keep the coffee in readiness, when I ring.

[*She also goes out at the right, leaves the door slightly open behind her. Voices are heard outside. Brief silence. Then the door is opened*

wide. PAUL, HELLA, VON GLYSZINSKI, AUNT CLARA *appear in the door.* PAUL *has taken off his coat and hat outside.* HELLA *wears a fur coat and toque.* GLYSZINSKI *wears a hat and heavy winter overcoat, turned up over his ears.*]

GLYSZINSKI. Well, if it's all right with you, I prefer to go to my room for the present.

PAUL. As you please. Aunt Clara will show you the way upstairs. Won't you, Auntie?

AUNT CLARA. Yes, I'll be glad to show the gentleman up.

PAUL (*smiling*). Or aren't the guest-rooms upstairs any more?

AUNT CLARA (*reproachfully*). Why, my boy, we should certainly not think of changing the rooms around. They are very satisfactory and then they've been there *so* long.

PAUL (*as before*). Why, of course. They have been there *so* long!

GLYSZINSKI. Shall we go?

AUNT CLARA (*places her hand on* PAUL'S *shoulder*). You will find, Paul, everything here is pretty much as of old. Just make yourself comfortable! I shall be back directly. (*To* GLYSZINSKI.) Please, will you come this way? (*She points toward the outside. The two go out. The door is closed behind them.*)

PAUL (*who, until now, has not faced the hall, remains standing in astonishment*). Well, the chandelier in full splendor. (*Meditating.*) The old chandelier. Heavens, how sacred it was to me when I was a boy. It was fine of Aunt Clara to light the chandelier.

HELLA (*meanwhile has slowly walked through the hall, scrutinizing various things, sits down on the arm of a chair near the sofa, still wearing her cloak and toque and keeping her muff in her hand as if she were on the point of departing again at once. She smiles a trifle sarcastically*). Yes, for a bright morning, the chandelier suggests this, that and what not.

AUL (*fixing his eyes upon her calmly*). To me the morning seemed pretty dark, as we were riding along. Didn't it to you?

ELLA. Oh yes, you are right. It was even disagreeably dark. I kept on fearing we should fall into the ditch. I don't like to ride in a strange region by night.

[*Brief silence.*]

AUL (*facing* HELLA, *shaking his head*). I do not see what objections you can have to the chandelier.

ELLA (*meeting his eye calmly*). None whatever, Paul.

AUL. Aunt Clara's intentions were certainly good. One does realize that one was expected. (*He turns away and takes several steps through the hall.*)

ELLA. But you know that *I* do not like such occasions. That is simply my disposition. I cannot make myself over.

AUL. I certainly do not demand that. (*Turns on his heel and approaches again.*) Or have I not always allowed you to have your own way?

ELLA (*also compromising*). Certainly, certainly, up to the present we *have* agreed on this point.

AUL. And shall continue in the future. (*He extends his right hand to* HELLA.)

ELLA (*grasps his hand and looks into his face squarely*). I am true to my old self, Paul, remain so too.

AUL. Simply because each one of us has freely gone his own way, nothing has been able to separate us. That is the reason why we have kept together so firmly, all of these years. Don't you think so too?

ELLA. It seems to me that I held that point of view long before we were acquainted.

AUL (*seriously*) Rather say, with that point of view, we *found* each other. For this point of view, I sacrificed my home, Hella!

ELLA. Yes, therefore it surprises me all the more, that you suddenly seem to be forgetting all about that . . .

AUL. In what respect?

HELLA (*continuing*). That you behave like a school boy who is coming home for his vacation.

PAUL (*is silent for a moment, then continues*). Hella! . . . My father is lying there on his bier. (*He points toward the right.*) I did not see him again!

HELLA. Was it your fault? He forbade you his house! *This* house!

PAUL (*without listening to her*). I have not been able to come to an understanding with him. I shall never come to an understanding with him! Do you realize what that means? (*He turns away.*)

[HELLA *shrugs her shoulders and remains silent. Pause.*]

PAUL (*has walked through the hall with heavy steps, then becomes composed and speaks in a more unconcerned manner*). Will you take off your things, Hella?

HELLA (*rises, wavering*). I don't know, I am cold.

PAUL (*near her*). But how can you be cold. The fire is roaring in the fireplace. Our good aunt has made such perfect preparations. Who knows *when* she got up in order that we might be comfortable. (*He goes to the fireplace and throws wood into it.*)

HELLA (*leaning on the chair, taciturnly*). It is probably due to the night ride.

PAUL (*approaches her*). Well, come along! I'll help you! . . . You will surely not remain in your furs. (*He helps her. She takes off her hat and cloak and goes to the fireplace not without hesitation.*)

PAUL (*following her with his eyes, gloomily*). You are acting as if you preferred to leave again at once?

HELLA (*turning fully toward him*). Frankly, Paul, that is what I should like to do.

PAUL (*flaring up*). Hella! (*Calm again, coldly.*) I simply do not understand you!

HELLA (*has sat down at the fireplace, holds her feet up to the fire*). I do not understand *you*, and *you* do not understand *me!* That is as broad as it is long.

PAUL (*shrugging his shoulders*). I don't know how you can think of going away under the present circumstances.

HELLA. Quite simple. I do not demand that you shall go with me. You can remain here as long as you are needed, order your affairs, look about for a purchaser of the estate, and when good luck favors you in finding him, you can come on. For the present I may as well precede you to Berlin. You know that editing cannot be put off, the next number must be out in a week. *Both* of us *can* not be absent. At least *I* am indispensable.

PAUL. And for this purpose you made a trip of eight hours from Berlin to this place? Hella! (*He places his hand on her shoulder.*)

HELLA. Yes, this unfortunate trip!

PAUL (*with a deep breath*). Unfortunate trip, yes indeed!

HELLA. For I must tell you, Paul . . .

PAUL. Yes?

HELLA. I have a feeling that I am not quite suited to this place.

PAUL (*bitterly*). Aha! That is at the bottom of this insistence about the new number of *Women's Rights,* which is all but complete even now.

HELLA (*unswervingly*). I have a feeling that I am not adapted to this environment, and my feelings have rarely deceived me.

PAUL. Oh, your feelings, Hella! Your feelings! If you had only followed them solely, many matters would stand better today! Believe me.

HELLA. I follow my feelings entirely too much, or I should have remained in Berlin and should not sit here in the presence of peasants where I have nothing at stake.

PAUL. But I have, Hella! I have very much at stake here. After all a man does not abandon his inheritance point blank. Do not forget that.

HELLA (*straightening up*). Of what concern is that to me? Sell it, why don't you! It's nothing but a dead weight to you anyhow.

PAUL. Why, I agree with you, Hella. And I am in favor of selling the estate. But not today nor tomorrow. Such things call for deliberation.

HELLA. But I simply cannot wait that long. Just confess it, Paul, my place is in the world. You surely don't expect me to desert my post. Our whole cause is hazarded, if I throw up the game now. Particularly at this moment. You are demanding too much! . . . Do you expect me to give up my life work, simply because you cannot break away from your clod, on account of a stupid loyalty?

PAUL (*controlling himself*). It seems to me, Hella, that we have a career *in common*. You are acting as if you alone had a career.

HELLA. We have had, up to this day. You are the one who is retreating! Not I!

PAUL (*becoming excited*). Hella! You have been my friend! My comrade in stress and tribulation, I may say. We have builded our life on our own resources, our new life, when the old life had renounced us. We have stood together in the combat, for ten years! Are you willing to forget that now? (*Has stepped up to her and seized both of her hands.*)

HELLA (*tries to disengage herself*). Goodness, Paul . . .

PAUL (*fixing his eyes upon her*). For years you have come to me with your wishes. Now I am coming to you! Now your friendship is to assert itself. Answer me!

HELLA (*convinced against her will, is forced to smile*). Do not fall into tragedy, Paul!

PAUL (*unswervingly*). You are to tell me whether you can leave me alone at this time, whether you can bring yourself to that point. Only a word!

HELLA. Am I not here? What else do you expect? And I shall remain here. At least for the immediate present.

PAUL (*shaking her hands vigorously*). Oh, then all will turn out well! You will remain here! Thank you for that! (*Breaking out in joy.*) Now everything may turn out well after all. (*He walks to and fro in suppressed excitement.*) Mad as it may sound, Hella, under these circumstances. (*He stops, facing her.*) I am almost merry! (*He continues to pace up and down.*)

HELLA (*scrutinizes him and shakes her head*). Paul! Paul! Childishness! From one extreme to the other! When will you come to reason. Take an example in me!

PAUL (*stopping in the centre of the hall, sweeping his hand around*). Hella! . . . This is the soil which nurtured my youth. Do you expect me not be happy?

AUNT CLARA (*enters again from the right. She has taken off her head-cloth and wears a black dress*). Now then, Paul, here I am again. Have you made yourself at home? Is it warm enough in the hall for both of you? You probably got good and cold on the way. You had the wind to face, didn't you?

PAUL (*reflecting*). Yes, pretty much! I think it was from the east.

AUNT CLARA. It did take me rather a long while, didn't it, Paul?

PAUL. You probably had some other matters that required attention? (*Now that she stands directly before him he looks at her more closely.*) And how Aunt Clara has dressed up! (*He shakes his finger at her.*) Well, well, Auntie. Still so vain, in your years?

AUNT CLARA. Why, Paul, this old dress! (*She strokes her skirt with her hands.*) I have worn it so many years. Don't you remember at all?

PAUL. Yes, yes, now . . . (*Meditates a moment.*)

AUNT CLARA. I was wearing it when your mother died. That is the time I had it made.

PAUL (*abruptly*). Oh yes. That has been a long time, to be sure!

AUNT CLARA. In waiting for you, I had quite forgotten that I still had on my morning dress. So I quickly put on something else.

HELLA. That is exactly what I intend to do, dear Miss Clara. (*She approaches the two.*)

PAUL. Yes, Auntie, you see, I don't even know where you have quartered us? Possibly you would show Hella . . . ?

AUNT CLARA. Right next door, dear Mrs. . . . Mrs.—Doctor!

HELLA (*nodding to her to desist*). Well then, please do not go to any trouble.

PAUL (*to* HELLA, *who has picked up her things*). May I relieve you of something? Or can I help you in any other way? Unlock the trunk, for instance?

HELLA (*refusing*). Do drop these courtesies, Paul! That kind of thing is certainly not in vogue with us.

PAUL (*curtly*). As you please!

[HELLA *goes out with her things through the open door on the left, closing it behind her.*]

PAUL (*to* AUNT CLARA, *who has been listening in amazement*). So you have lodged us next door? (*Hesitating as he points to the right.*) Over *there*, I suppose . . . ?

AUNT CLARA (*nodding*). Yes, over there, Paul, there . . . the body lies.

PAUL (*gloomily*). Shall we not go in, Aunt Clara?

AUNT CLARA. Why, not at once, my boy! You certainly must have something to eat first! Refresh yourself a little. I'll just call Lene, and have her bring the coffee! (*Starts for the bell-pull.*)

PAUL (*restraining her*). I think we had better wait until Hella and the gentleman are ready.

AUNT CLARA (*looking at him tenderly*). Now you're not *cold* at all, Paul?

PAUL (*significantly*). No, Auntie, I am not cold here. (*With less constraint.*) Just look at the fine fire in

the fireplace, how it flickers and crackles! I believe it too is glad that I am here again. But who is gladdest of all, well, Auntie, just guess who that may be?

AUNT CLARA (*shaking her head*). Why, I can't know that. I can't guess any more with this old head of mine.

PAUL (*slyly*). *That* she doesn't know! Oh Auntie, Auntie! Why, you yourself, you good old soul!

AUNT CLARA (*unaffectedly*). I did light the chandelier for you, Paul.

PAUL. Of course, the chandelier! Do you suppose I did not notice that you were at the bottom of that, Auntie? Come give me your hand; thank you very much, Auntie!

AUNT CLARA (*putting her arms around him*). I'm going to give you a kiss, my boy. Your wife will take no offense at that. (*She kisses him.*)

PAUL. Oh my wife! That needn't . . . (*He gently disengages himself from his aunt's embrace and goes to and fro meditating.*)

AUNT CLARA (*following him with her eyes*). Do you still remember, Paul, how I would hold you on my knees and rock you when you were a little fellow?

PAUL (*paces to and fro again*). Yes, yes, how all of that comes back again! How it is resurrected from its sleep! . . . (*He sits down before the fireplace in deep thought and stares into the fire.*)

AUNT CLARA (*also goes to the fireplace*). Right there, where you are sitting now, my boy, you often read fairy tales to me, about Snow-White and Cinderella and about the wolf and the old grandmother . . .

PAUL (*dreaming*). Fairy tales, yes indeed!

AUNT CLARA. You sat here, and I here, and you held up your fairy tale book and acted as if you were grown up . . .

PAUL (*smiling*). I suppose that's the way one felt too!

AUNT CLARA. And papa and mamma were out in society or in the city . . .

PAUL. Yes, quite so, that's it. For, on the whole, as I remember, I was not in this hall frequently. There was always a little fear mixed up with it. Quite natural! The pictures, the spaciousness, the emptiness and all that! Later that did disappear. The last time that I was in this room, when may it have been . . . ? (*He leans his head on his hand in meditation.*)

AUNT CLARA. It was Christmas Eve, ten years ago, Paul.

PAUL. Christmas Eve ten years ago! You may be right. I remember it was a short time before I had . . . the crash with father. I had come home at Christmas just because I imagined that that was the best time to come to an understanding with father about all of those matters, my future and other affairs, and I also recall that I wanted to allow the holidays to pass before I dared to come out with my projects, the founding of my journal and my marriage and all the beautiful surprises! Oh it was postponed as long as possible. One did have an inkling of what it would lead to. Of course no one had an idea how it would *really* turn out!

AUNT CLARA. No, Paul, no one had an idea that that would be the last Christmas Eve that we should celebrate together. Your father least of all. All of us were as merry as ever. There stood the tree and the chandelier was lighted . . .

PAUL. Correct, correct! And Antoinette . . . wasn't Antoinette present too? Why of course? That's what complicated the matter so terribly for me. There she sits, my father has invited her, I know that he intends her for me, I am to marry her, I'm to become engaged to her right under the Christmas-tree, as nearly as I can tell. The word is expected from me. All of you are waiting, and I . . . why I simply can't. I simply *cannot*, because I have forged quite different plans for my future, because I too have obligations, in

short, simply because it is impossible. (*He gets up in excitement.*) Because it *was* impossible, Aunt Clara! Because I imagined I could not stand it in the country, was destined for something better than a sturdy estate owner and family father, simply because Hella was putting such bees in my bonnet and because, in my stupidity, I believed it all! Just as if the world had been waiting for me to come and set it right! Ridiculous! But at that time I was convinced of it. At that time I had to make a clean breast of it or it would have cost me my life. But, oh, how I *did* suffer in those days!

AUNT CLARA. If you had only told me about it, Paul! But I didn't know a thing about it. Not until it was too late . . .

PAUL (*breathing deeply*). Yes, then it came quickly. I could not conceal it any longer. It simply burst forth. It can have been only a few days later . . .

AUNT CLARA. Three days, my boy . . .

PAUL. Three days, yes, very likely. To me, to be sure, they seemed like eternity. And strangely enough: terrible as the clash with father was, when he found out what intentions I had and that I did not want to remain with him and marry Antoinette and take over the estate some day. Believe me, Aunt Clara, it was a relief in a sense, after all, when it had been said, and father had forbidden me the house and I sat in the carriage and drove away and was free for good. Yes for good! That is what I made myself believe at the time and I fairly breathed with relief and imbibed the crisp air! That must have been approximately this time of the year. Why, certainly! Just about. It *was* at Christmas.

AUNT CLARA. Third holiday is when it was, Paul. I can still see you get into the carriage. It gave me such a shock. I thought I'd fall over.

PAUL (*caressing her*). Good soul that you are! Yes you always took my part . . . (*Interrupting himself.*) Third holiday, you say, it took place? (*Striking his forehead.*) Why that is today. Ten years ago today!

AUNT CLARA. This very day!

PAUL (*goes back and forth excitedly*). I say . . . I say . . . Ten years! Horrible!

AUNT CLARA. And you see, my boy, all this time these candles have not been lighted! (*She points to the chandelier.*) Just as they were put out on Christmas Eve, they are in their places today.

PAUL (*gloomily*). So that is why you lighted the chandelier, Auntie?

AUNT CLARA. Yes, now that you are here again, it occurred to me that the candles ought to be lighted again.

PAUL. I think we shall let that suffice. Broad daylight is already peering through the shutters. (*He points to the background where broad daylight comes in through the heart-shaped apertures of the shutters, then slowly puts out the candles, one by one.*) Now then, let us put them out!

AUNT CLARA (*goes to the background and unscrews the shutters, opens them, letting the daylight stream in, and puts out the lamp on the commode*). Praise the Lord! After all it *has* become daylight once more.

PAUL (*has put out the candles and looks over at her*). What do you mean by that, Aunt Clara?

AUNT CLARA (*having opened the shutters, comes forward again and whispers*). I was forced to think so much, because it was the first night that your father has been dead and has been lying there in the corner room.

PAUL (*with suppressed feeling, after a short struggle*). Will you not tell me how father died?

AUNT CLARA. Oh, Paul what is there to tell about that? Didn't I telegraph to you? Heart failure, is what Doctor Bodenstein said. He went to bed at ten o'clock

that night, as always; it was night before last, the first holiday.

PAUL. Didn't he call at all? Did he not succeed in making himself heard at all?

AUNT CLARA. Not a word! From that time on, no mortal heard another sound from him.

PAUL (*covers his face with his hands, then hesitatingly*). Do you think he still thought of me?

AUNT CLARA. The departed thought of you very often especially lately when thoughts of death were coming to him, I am certain of that.

PAUL. And did he not want to see me once more?

AUNT CLARA. He said nothing about that.

PAUL. Nothing, Aunt Clara? Nothing? Think!

AUNT CLARA. He *said* nothing.

PAUL (*excited*). But he *thought* it. And did not have time to do it! Now he is taking it down into his grave with him. [*Pause.*]

AUNT CLARA. I was going to ask you, Paul . . .?

PAUL. Well? (*He stands before her at the fireplace.*)

AUNT CLARA. What kind of a man can that be who came with you?

PAUL. Glyszinski?

AUNT CLARA. Why yes, the one I took up stairs, the young man?

PAUL. Heavens, he is a friend of ours. Particularly of Hella.

AUNT CLARA. Of your wife? Why, Paul!

PAUL (*smiling*). Oh, Auntie! There is no danger in him. You need not have any scruples about that. Hella indeed crams her head with thoughts quite distinct from love. She never did suffer from that.

AUNT CLARA. But to think that he just came along? Did you invite him?

PAUL (*shrugging his shoulders*). Well, what is a man to do? He lives with us.

AUNT CLARA (*more and more astonished*). He lives with you?

PAUL. We keep house together, yes. And so he wanted to come with us, and Hella was also of the opinion that we could not exactly desert him. He is likely to do some fool thing. You know he is always doing fool things . . . It *wasn't* very agreeable to me, I must confess. But it *would* not do to leave him at home. When Hella takes a thing like that into her head . . .

AUNT CLARA. Don't be offended, Paul, I can't get that through my head . . . Aren't you the master of your house?

PAUL (*smiling*). Master of my house? . . . No, Auntie, Hella would never put up with that and on that point I am forced to agree with her.

AUNT CLARA. The things that one does get to hear in one's old age! I'm too dense for that.

PAUL. Well you see, Aunt Clara, these are views that are not exactly understood in the country. One has to work up to that gradually.

AUNT CLARA. Are you really happy with them, Paul?

PAUL. Why I have fought almost fifteen years for these views! Surely a man will not do a thing like that without serious consideration.

AUNT CLARA. So you held those very views at the time when you had your quarrel with your father, who is now dead and gone?

PAUL. That's the very reason I went away, Auntie. Do you understand now why it was impossible for me to remain?

AUNT CLARA (*after a short silence, significantly*). And do you sometimes still think of Antonie, Paul?

PAUL (*meditating*). Antoinette? . . . Oh yes, sometimes.

AUNT CLARA. Now do be frank, Paul! Has the thought never come to you that you would really like to have Antonie?

PAUL (*absent-minded*). Who? I have her?

AUNT CLARA. Why Paul? *You* have *her* and *she* have *you!* Didn't you really care for each other a bit?

MAX HALBE

PAUL (*as before, supporting his head on his hand*). Do you think so? That is so long ago? Possibly. What do I know about it? (*He sits up.*)

AUNT CLARA. We were always in the habit of saying they'll make a fine couple when they are big, you and Antonie.

PAUL (*almost painfully*). You see, Auntie, what mistakes one *can* make. Nothing can be determined beforehand. But I almost think you are right. I liked her quite well, once upon a time. Something like that begins to dawn on me. A big, stupid, love-sick lubber. That's *me*. And *she* . . . What was *she?* (*With the suggestion of a smile.*) A remarkably beautiful, sweet young thing with ashy-blond braids. Yes, yes, something like that dawns upon me. She did have splendid ashy-blond hair and dark eyes. (*He leans his head on his hand.*)

AUNT CLARA. How well you still remember that.

PAUL (*collects himself again*). Yes, strange, as it comes to me now. But at that time, you know, when I came back as a student, the aforesaid Christmas, it was all gone, as if obliterated, not a trace of it left. Then my head was filled with things of quite another nature. My home had become strange to me, that is it, Auntie. Hella was in my mind. For that reason nothing could come of it, the match between Antoinette and me. (GLYSZINSKI *enters from the right, followed by* LENE.)

LENE (*remaining at the door*). Shall I bring the coffee, Miss Clara?

AUNT CLARA (*has also stepped to the door*). Yes, and don't forget the pound-cake! . . . But no, wait, I'll get it myself. Just a moment, Paul! (*She motions to him and goes out at the right with* LENE.)

GLYSZINSKI (*has stepped to the center of the room. He is faultlessly clad in a black suit, spick and span from top to toe*). Here I am! (*He looks about.*)

PAUL (*approaches* GLYSZINSKI). Yes, here you are! . . . You have spent much time on your toilet.

GLYSZINSKI. Why, not more than usual.

PAUL. To be sure! That's correct. (*Looking at him with a bitter smile.*) Well it *did* pay for the trouble. You are fit for a ball.

GLYSZINSKI (*looks around again*). Where is your wife?

PAUL. Also busy with her toilet. But will surely be here directly. It doesn't take her half as long as it does you. Meanwhile, sit down! (*He invites him to sit down on a chair by the sofa.*)

GLYSZINSKI (*sits down on the chair at the right of the sofa, keeping his eye on the door at the left.*) Ah, here comes madam! (*He gets up to meet* HELLA, *who is just entering the door on the left, clad in a pleated blouse and a plain skirt.*) May I conduct you to the table, madam? (*He offers her his arm.*)

HELLA (*places her arm on his and looks over at the table*). Why, is it time?

GLYSZINSKI (*leads* HELLA *to the sofa*). Please, here in the place of honor.

HELLA. Is it absolutely required that I should occupy the sofa? Will you not sit here, Paul? (*She stands at the sofa hesitating.*)

GLYSZINSKI (*with the tips of his fingers placed together*). Please, please, madam. You are to preside!

PAUL (*walks through the hall with his hands on his back and speaks over his shoulder*). Don't be embarrassed!

HELLA. I am not particularly in love with this old uncomfortable furniture. I distinctly prefer a pretty modern fauteuil. (*She sits down*).

LENE (*comes in at the right with the coffee service, places the tray containing the coffee-pot, cream-pitcher and cake on the table between the cups. Addresses* HELLA). Miss Clara will bring the pound-cake directly. Shall I fill the cups?

HELLA. You may go. We shall attend to that.

[LENE *casts a curious glance at the two, then at* PAUL, *and goes out at the right.*]

HELLA (*in an undertone to* GLYSZINSKI). Seems to be a regular country hussy. Did you notice the stupid expression?

GLYSZINSKI (*quoting with dignity*). Upon her brow the Lord did nail a brazen slab!

HELLA (*to* PAUL, *who is still walking about*). Paul, can't you stop that everlasting marching?

PAUL. I find it agreeable after the night's travel. Have you any objections?

HELLA. Yes, it makes me nervous, especially here in this awful hall, where every step reverberates ten times over, because you do not even have the proper carpets. Isn't there another room, where one can sit with some comfort. (*See pours out her coffee.*)

PAUL (*with restrained asperity*). No, not at present!

HELLA. Then at least do me the favor to sit down, your coffee is getting cold, anyhow. (*She pours out* PAUL'S *coffee.*)

PAUL (*approaching*). Very well! I shall sit down then.

GLYSZINSKI (*raising his cup*). And I, madam? Am I to have none?

HELLA (*decisively*). Have you forgotten our household regulations, dear sir?

GLYSZINSKI (*grumbling*). But he got some, didn't he?

HELLA. I have allowed an exception in Paul's case today. Just take the pot and help yourself.

GLYSZINSKI (*shaking his head*). Too bad! Too bad! (*He pours out his coffee.*)

AUNT CLARA (*has entered from the right carrying a platter with a large pound-cake*). Children, here comes the pound-cake! Fresh from the oven. It's fairly steaming still. (*She cuts the cake.*) You surely haven't taken your coffee already?

HELLA (*very courteously*). You are really going to too much trouble, dear Miss Clara.

AUNT CLARA. Trouble, well, well. But now do help yourself! (*She puts a large piece of cake on each plate.*)

PAUL (*smiling*). Do you know, Hella, I do almost feel as I did as a schoolboy, when I came home for the Christmas vacation. In those days we would also sit in the hall and over there the fire would burn and the pound-cake would stand on the table exactly as today. Only that my mother had done the baking.

AUNT CLARA (*in the chair opposite the fireplace*). Now you must imagine: *I* am your mother, Paul. (*She has also poured out her coffee and begins to drink it.*) How do you like it?

PAUL. Just as much as in the old days. It seems to me as if it were today.

AUNT CLARA. Then eat away, my boy!

HELLA. You have really had very good luck with this pound-cake, my dear Miss Clara. Accept my compliments.

GLYSZINSKI (*consumes his piece with great satisfaction*). Delicious! A work of art!

PAUL. You may well feel set up about that, Auntie. Glyszinski knows all about cake.

GLYSZINSKI. Yes in such matters we Poles are connoisseurs.

HELLA. Their whole nourishment is made up of desserts.

GLYSZINSKI. I consider sweets a thousand times more elegant than that brutal alcohol, which deadens all finer instincts.

AUNT CLARA. I suppose the gentleman was also born in this region.

GLYSZINSKI. Yes, mademoiselle, I am a Pole.

PAUL. A Pole, and attended the gymnasium in Berlin!

GLYSZINSKI. Unfortunately I got away too early. Nevertheless I shall remain what I always was.

AUNT CLARA. Do you remember Laskowski, Paul?

PAUL. From Klonowken?

AUNT CLARA. Yes, quite nearby! He owns the neighboring estate.

PAUL. Why, of course! He is even a relative in a sense. What makes you think of him, Aunt Clara?

AUNT CLARA. It just occurred to me, simply because he is also a Polander and gets along with his German so well.

PAUL. Why, I even attended school with him for a while. He *was* a fox if there ever was one.

AUNT CLARA (*in a searching manner*). Aren't you glad, Paul, that your father held on to Ellernhof for you?

PAUL. How so? Why?

AUNT CLARA. He might have sold the estate to Laskowski or some one else.

HELLA (*who has been leaning back and playing the part of the silent but attentive listener, takes a hand*). I cannot see in what sense that would have been a misfortune.

PAUL. If Ellernhof had gone over into the hands of *strangers?* You are simply judging from your point of view. Then I should never have seen my childhood home again.

HELLA (*forcibly*). But what are we to do with it. We have it on our hands and can't help but be glad to get rid of it at any price.

AUNT CLARA (*with growing uneasiness, to* PAUL). What is your wife saying? You intend to go away, intend to sell?

HELLA. Why, certainly! As soon as possible! What else is there for us to do?

AUNT CLARA. You intend to sell the estate that has been in the family over two hundred years?

HELLA. That can be of no possible advantage to us. Do you expect us to settle down here? Do you suppose I have the least inclination to degenerate out here in the country?

AUNT CLARA. And you, Paul, what have you to say to that?

HELLA. Paul fully agrees with me.

PAUL (*gets up, distressed*). Don't torment me with that now, good people, I beg of you. I am really not in the proper mood. There is certainly no hurry about that matter.

AUNT CLARA. Don't you realize that you will commit a sin, if you sell the fine estate that your father maintained for you?

HELLA. Oh sin! Sin! Do you not, from your point of view, consider the manner in which Paul's father behaved toward us a sin? I am unable to see any difference. There was no compunction about locking the door upon us. I was treated as a nondescript, bringing disgrace to the family! As if my family could not match up with the Warkentins any day! After all, I am the daughter of a university professor, my dear Miss Clara. You possibly fail to appreciate that a bit. Therefore I repeat to you, Paul hasn't the slightest reason to be ashamed of me! And he *hasn't* been. But Paul's father *was*. He forced us to earn our daily bread! And now that we have been successful, now that we have won a place for ourselves, now they begin to think of us, simply because they need us. Now they are becoming sentimental. No, dearest! You did not concern yourselves about us! Now we shall not concern ourselves about you! Now we shall simply pay it all back! That's the *sin* that you were talking about. Ellernhof has no claims upon us, (*She breathes deeply and leans back on the sofa.*)

GLYSZINSKI (*has hung upon her lips, enthusiastically*). Madam, your hand! (*He extends his hand.*)

HELLA (*curtly*). Oh do let us dispense with that for the present, doctor!

PAUL (*has been listening from the fireplace and now approaches*). That is quite correct, Hella, but there is one thing that you must not forget. I really did provoke my father at the time. I was young and inexperienced. I felt compelled to tell him at the outset, even before I went to the university, that I did not believe that I should be able to endure life in the country later on.

HELLA. And the fact that he expected you to marry any woman that suited *him;* you don't seem to think of that at all.

PAUL. Yes, yes, you are right . . .

AUNT CLARA. Tell me, Paul?

PAUL. Yes, Auntie.

AUNT CLARA. What in the world have you to do in Berlin that prevents you from staying here?

PAUL. Oh, Aunt Clara, that is a difficult matter! I publish a journal.

AUNT CLARA. A journal? Hm!

HELLA. We publish a feminist journal which we ourselves have founded and simply cannot desert.

AUNT CLARA (*naïvely*). Well is that so very necessary, Paul?

HELLA. *Is* it necessary?

PAUL (*dubiously*). Oh Hella! (*Shrugs his shoulders.*)

HELLA. Yes it is necessary. If *you* are able to forget it, *I* am *not!*

PAUL. I shall not quarrel now, the hour does not seem fitting to me. I want to go in. (*He makes a significant gesture to the right.*) Would you care to go with me?

HELLA. You want to see him?

PAUL. Yes, I want to see him.

HELLA (*gets up and steps up to* PAUL). Excuse me, Paul! I am really not in the frame of mind.

PAUL. As you think best.

HELLA. You know very well that I spare myself the sight of the dead, whenever I can. I did not even see *my* father.

AUNT CLARA (*has risen*). I'll go with you, my boy, brace up!

PAUL (*nods to her, choking down his words*). I'm all right. (*The two slowly go out at the right.*) [*Short silence.*]

HELLA (*stands at the chair, clenches her fist, stamps her foot, in a burst of passion*). I *cannot* look at the man who has forbidden me his house! Never!

GLYSZINSKI (*has also risen, steps up to* HELLA). How I admired you, madam!

HELLA (*still struggling*). I cannot bring myself to *that!*

GLYSZINSKI (*sentimentally*). How you sat there! How you spoke! Every word a blow! No evasion! No retreat! Mind triumphing over matter! The first time I ever had this impression of you, Hella, do you recall, the large meeting when you stood on the stage and your eye controlled thousands? Then and there my soul rushed out to you! Now you possess it.

HELLA (*stands erect, resolutely and deliberately*). If I really possess your soul, dear doctor, listen to my request.

GLYSZINSKI. I am your slave, command me!

HELLA. It concerns Paul. You see how matters stand with him.

GLYSZINSKI (*gloomily*). Paul is not a modern man. I knew that long ago.

HELLA. Let us avoid all digressions now! (*With unflinching emphasis.*) Paul *must . . . not . . . remain here!* Do you understand?

GLYSZINSKI. What can I do in the matter?

HELLA (*taps her finger on his chest*). You must help me get him away from here as soon as possible!

GLYSZINSKI. And you would ask *me* to do *that?*

HELLA. Why shouldn't I?

GLYSZINSKI. Expect me to help reëstablish the bond between you? Don't be inhuman, Hella!

HELLA. But you surely realize the relations that obtain between you and me, doctor. You are my co-worker, my friend!

GLYSZINSKI. Is that all, Hella?

HELLA. Why, do you demand more? Beyond friendship I can give you nothing! No, it will be better for you to help me plan how we can get him away most readily. Rather today than tomorrow.

GLYSZINSKI. Even if I were willing; why he pays no attention to me. Sometimes he strikes the pose of the man of thirty and treats me like a schoolboy. If it were not for you, Hella!

HELLA (*goes back and forth in intense excitement*). I see it coming! I see it coming! Irresistible! I have been watching it for a year. Something is working on him. The old spirits have been revived in him. They are restless to assert themselves. That calls for prompt action. He must not remain here. He must absolutely not remain in this atmosphere, which unsettles the mind, this funereal atmosphere. Oh! I can't stand it! Come on, doctor, I must have some fresh air! Get my things!

GLYSZINSKI. I am on the wing! (*About to start in some direction or other.*)

HELLA (*restrains him*). But no, wait a moment! We can go right through our rooms. A door leads to the garden from there. (*She listens.*) Isn't that Paul, now? Do you hear?

GLYSZINSKI. It seems to be.

HELLA (*hurriedly*). Quickly! I do not care to see him now! I don't want to hear about the dead man. I can't endure it. Do hurry! (*She draws him along out toward the left.*)

[PAUL *and* AUNT CLARA *come in again from the right.* PAUL *walks slowly through the hall with his head bowed. For a moment he remains standing before the chair near the sofa, then suddenly sits down and presses his face into his hands.* AUNT CLARA *has slowly followed him, stands before him and looks at him lovingly and sadly. Brief silence.*]

AUNT CLARA (*puts her hand on his head*). Compose yourself, Paul! What's the good of it! Your father is past all trouble.

PAUL (*without raising his head*). Yes, he's beyond it all.

AUNT CLARA. All of us may be glad when we are that far along.

PAUL (*between his teeth*). When we are that far along, yes, yes, Aunt Clara! When we are all through with it, this incomprehensible, senseless force! (*He leans back in the chair and folds his hands over his head.*)

AUNT CLARA. Your dead father enjoys the best lot after all. It's not at all an occasion for weeping, Paul.

PAUL (*nods his head mechanically*). You caught the meaning, Auntie.

AUNT CLARA. I am old, my boy. I know what is back of life. Nothing.

PAUL. You have caught the meaning.

AUNT CLARA. When you are as far along as I am, you will think so too.

PAUL (*throws his head back on his chair, yielding to his pain*). I am tired, Aunt Clara! Tired enough to die!

AUNT CLARA. That is due to the journey, Paul.

PAUL (*repeats mechanically*). That is due to the journey. (*Waking up.*) You are right, Aunt Clara. To the long journey and the long, long way.

AUNT CLARA. Now you will take a rest, my boy.

PAUL. That's what I should like to do, Aunt Clara. Take a real rest after all of the wild years! And they do say the best rest is to be found at home.

AUNT CLARA. Do you see how good it is for you to be at home again.

PAUL (*absorbed*). How calmly he lay there. How great and serene! Not the vestige of a doubt left! Everything overcome. All the questions solved! . . . (*Lamenting.*) Father, father, if I were only in your place! (*He presses his head in his hands.*)

AUNT CLARA (*worried*). Paul, what's the matter?

PAUL. Nothing, Aunt Clara, it's over now.

AUNT CLARA. No, no, my boy, there's something wrong with you. You needn't tell me. I know well enough.

PAUL (*controlling himself*). You know nothing at all.

AUNT CLARA. And you can't talk me out of it. It's your wife. What I know, I know. Your wife is to blame! And if you *do* say no ten times over!

PAUL (*gets up, with a firm voice*). I repeat, Aunt Clara, you know nothing about it! I do not want to hear one word about that, please remember. (*With marked*

emphasis.) I do not want to hear of it! (*Walks up and down in excitement.*)

AUNT CLARA. Paul, Paul, if you had only taken Antonie!

PAUL (*sits down in the chair at the fireplace, restraining his pain*). Be quiet, Aunt Clara! . . . Do you want to make me even more miserable than I am?

AUNT CLARA (*gets up, steps up to him and lays her hand on his head*). My poor, poor boy!

ACT II

The forenoon of the following day. The gloomy light of a winter day comes in through the wide windows at the background of the hall, as on the day before. Outside, white bushes and trees loom up vaguely. A dark velvet cover is spread over the sofa table now. A fire again blazes in the fireplace.

In front of it on the left sits GLYSZINSKI *with his feet toward the fire and a book in his hand. He is again faultlessly clad in a black suit; looks pale. At his right, in the center chair* HELLA *reposes comfortably. She likewise holds a book and looks as if she had been reading. As on the previous day, her dress is dark, but not black.*

HELLA. These awful visits of condolence all day yesterday! If calls of that kind continue today, I'll simply lock myself in and fail to appear. Let Paul settle it as he may.

GLYSZINSKI. And yet! How easily and graciously you can dispose of the good people. I can't get over my astonishment.

HELLA. Yes and then to feign a sadness that one does not remotely feel, *cannot* feel! What an idea!

GLYSZINSKI (*after a moment of reflection, whispering*). Do you know what makes me glad?

HELLA (*curtly*). No, possibly you will tell me.

GLYSZINSKI (*halts a bit*). That the dead man is out of the house! . . . I suppose they took him to the church?

HELLA. Yes, quite early this morning. The coffin is to be there till tomorrow. I suppose you were afraid?

GLYSZINSKI. Why you know that I sometimes *see* things.

HELLA. You modern creature, you! Look at me! I *try* to see *things* by daylight. I can battle with *them!* Not with the other kind.

GLYSZINSKI. Oh you don't realize how I have envied you for that.

HELLA. Why don't you follow my example then? Do not lose yourself deeper and deeper in your riddles. Enter the conflict! Just as I do!

GLYSZINSKI. You, Hella . . . ! I cannot vie with you.

HELLA. Don't be a weakling! Try it! You are old enough.

GLYSZINSKI (*grumbling*). *Too* old.

HELLA (*more and more impassioned*). Too old! Ridiculous. When Paul was of your age he was already in the fray, founding our *Women's Rights.* And I, I helped him.

GLYSZINSKI. You must have been of firmer fiber than we of the younger generation.

HELLA (*gets up, stands up straight, folds her hands over her head*). Possibly! I was scarcely twenty at the time, but I felt strong enough to throw down the gauntlet to the whole world, when it was a question of my rights. I had an uncontrollable thirst for freedom, and it is not too much to assert that I gave Paul the incentive for all that followed.

GLYSZINSKI. That's just like you, Hella! I suppose he would simply have remained in his old trot if it had not been for you.

HELLA (*supporting herself on the chair*). I should not go that far. He had already freed himself, but did not know in what direction to move. He was still groping. He might have followed an utterly wrong course, might have fooled away his time with literature and impractical things like that. His rescue from all that was my work. I guided him! You know he was a pupil of my father. When we became acquainted, I had no

difficulty in showering things upon him. You see I had spent my whole childhood in this intellectual atmosphere. And he . . . well, you can see from where he had come. (*She sweeps her hand around.*) That is just why I was ahead of him.

GLYSZINSKI (*lamenting*). Why was I not born ten years earlier? Then I should have found what he now has and fails to value!

HELLA (*walks through the hall slowly, engrossed in memories*). Yes it was a joyous time! All of us young, vigorous and certain of victory! (*Her manner becomes gloomy.*)

GLYSZINSKI (*has followed her with his eyes*). Are you so no longer, Hella?

HELLA (*morosely*). I? . . . (*Collects herself.*) More than ever . . . But I have become tired, Doctor!

GLYSZINSKI (*subdued*). I do suppose it requires more than mortal strength to hold out, in this fashion, a whole life long.

HELLA (*straightening up*). Yes, if one did not know that he is going to prevail, that he will carry out his demands; one can rest assured only when he has the better arguments in his favor. Not until then. (*She steps to the background in great excitement.*)

GLYSZINSKI (*jumps up*). Hella! Hella! . . .

HELLA (*comes back again*). Not an hour before that, I tell you. Do you understand the terrible aspect of my present position now? My nails fairly tingle. Whenever I hear the clock strike out there, something seems to drive me away. Another hour gone, and life is so short. It cries within me, go to your post, and I am forced to remain! I must remain on account of Paul!

GLYSZINSKI (*strikes his fist on the chair*). Oh he doesn't deserve to have you sacrifice yourself for him! If you called *me* in this manner . . . I should follow you to the scaffold!

HELLA (*approaches him, in a changed manner*). What was your impression of Paul today, Doctor? Be frank!

GLYSZINSKI (*gloomily*). Why do you ask *me* about that? I scarcely caught sight of him before he rode away.

HELLA. It seemed to me that he was more cheerful, freer. (*To herself.*) Possibly because the body was out of the house. (*She turns away again.*)

[GLYSZINSKI *steps to the background, shaking his head, seems in a quandary.*]

HELLA (*has paid no attention to him since her thoughts completely dominate her, speaks as if to herself*). May be all will turn out for the best after all. (*She gains control of herself and looks up.*) Where in the world are you, Doctor? (*She approaches him.*)

GLYSZINSKI (*stands at the window and looks into the garden*). I am watching the snow.

HELLA. I suppose you are surprised that I am hopeful again?

GLYSZINSKI. Since I have been in your company nothing surprises me!

HELLA (*continues*). But Paul must listen to reason. My position is clearly correct. You do not know him as I do. Paul is tender-hearted; all that is necessary is to know how to deal with him. (*She reflects a moment and concludes.*) Possibly I did not always know how to do that.

GLYSZINSKI (*deprecatingly*). Don't belittle yourself, Hella!

HELLA. And there *shall* be a change. But first of all he must get away from here. Of course we shall have to wait till after the funeral. But then I shall not allow myself to be kept here any longer. I'll get in and ride away and Paul will be forced to come along. When I once have him in Berlin again . . .

GLYSZINSKI. And the estate?

HELLA. I'll simply sell that.

GLYSZINSKI (*rushes up to her with flaming eyes*). Hella!

ELLA (*coldly*). Well?

LYSZINSKI. Are you going to leave Paul?

ELLA. How so? What is the matter with you?

LYSZINSKI (*seizes her hand*). Can't you leave Paul! My life is at stake.

ELLA. Dear friend, don't stake your life so foolishly! And release my hand. I do not want to leave Paul! I haven't the slightest reason to do so. We agree very well.

LYSZINSKI (*drops his head*). Then I was mistaken, after all.

ELLA. Yes, it seems so to me also. You simply do not know what Paul has been to me. [*Pause.*] I want to go to work, I still have much to do. The editorial work is crowding. (*Takes several steps.*)

AUL (*enters from the right, clad in a riding suit and riding boots, shakes off the snow and waves his hat vigorously as he speaks*). Good morning, you stay-at-homes! Just see how I look.

ELLA (*has turned around at his approach and looks at him*). You are bringing winter in with you, Paul.

AUL (*with dash*). That's what I'm doing. I'm bringing winter in with me. Regular country winter, with ice and snow, such as the city knows only by hearsay. Don't you envy me?

ELLA (*surprised*). How so? For what?

AUL. *For what*, she asks! Why for all the snow in which I have been stamping about! For this honest winter mood, that I have not had for so many years!

ELLA. Where in the world have you been?

AUL (*sits down, facing the fire, and crosses his legs*). Far, far away, I can tell you.

[GLYSZINSKI *has risen from his chair and has slowly walked over toward the left, where he sits down on the sofa and pretends to become interested in a book.*]

HELLA. One can tell that. You are in a beautiful condition.

PAUL (*stares into the fire, spinning away at his thoughts*). I rode a great, great distance! . . . To the border of our possessions!

HELLA. Is that so very far?

PAUL. *Very* far! . . . At least it seemed so to me when I was a child.

HELLA. Yes, of course, to a child everything seems larger.

PAUL. But this time it was no delusion! It was really quite a distance. And I did remain away long enough too.

HELLA (*sarcastically*). Are you not boasting, Paul? I believe you were riding around in a circle.

PAUL (*waking up*). And so I did. Criss cross over the fields, taking ditches, helter skelter as it were, right through the dense snow.

HELLA (*as before*). *Can* you really ride, Paul?

PAUL. I? Well, I should say! I supposed I had forgotten how, during all of these empty years, but when I had mounted, for a moment I *was* unsteady, but *only* for a moment, then I felt my old power. The bay realized that I still know how, and off we were like destruction itself.

GLYSZINSKI (*from the sofa*). I should like to try it myself sometime.

PAUL (*without heeding him*). And curiously enough Hella, strange as the way had naturally become to me, I nevertheless got along easily. After all, one does not forget the things with which one has once been familiar, and, you see, my father took me with him often enough in my boyhood. (*Smiling.*) Possibly in order that, some day in the future, I might get my bearings in the old fields! At last I got into the forest and when I was out of that, I saw the houses of Klonowken, all covered with snow . . .

HELLA (*has listened very attentively, interrupts*). Klonowken, you say? Isn't that the estate where—what is his name?—your relative lives?

PAUL. Laskowski, you mean?

HELLA. Quite right, Laskowski . . . But you did not call on him, did you?

PAUL. No, then I came back.

HELLA. The ride has certainly agreed with you. Your color is much better than yesterday.

PAUL (*joyously*). *Is* it? . . . Well that is just the way I feel.

HELLA. Then you can see more clearly today, what you wish to do and what is necessary?

PAUL. Much more clearly, Hella! As I trotted along in the snowstorm, many things dawned upon me. My head has became clear, Hella.

HELLA. I am glad for you and both of us!

PAUL (*seizes her hand*). Yes, for both of us. We must come to an agreement, Hella!

HELLA (*cautiously*). I hope we are agreed. And, moreover, you know how we can remain so!

PAUL (*thoughtful again*). Well, as I rode along, strange! So many years of desk work, I thought to myself, and nothing but desk work. My bones have almost become stiff as a result and, after all, what has come of it? Little enough! You surely must admit that.

HELLA (*seriously*). I can *not* admit that, Paul.

PAUL. But we do live in a continual turmoil, Hella, in an everlasting struggle the outcome of which we can not foresee and *from* which we shall reap no rewards. We are working for strangers, are sacrificing our best years and have forgotten to consider ourselves. Do you suppose they will thank us some day when we are down and out? Not a soul!

HELLA. Nor do I demand gratitude and recognition. I do what I have recognized to be correct; that constitutes my happiness.

PAUL. But not mine. I want more, Hella! I am at an age when fine words no longer avail me. And see, here is a world in which I have what I need, what I am seeking, here at last I can follow myself up, can see what is really in me and not what has merely been imposed upon me. I am on the crest of my life, Hella. Possibly past it. Do not take it amiss! I need rest, composure . . .

HELLA (*reserved*). And for that you are going to the end of the world?

PAUL. I had got to the end of the world! Now I shall begin all over again. Would the attempt not be worth while? Tell me, comrade! (*He seizes both of* HELLA'S *hands and looks squarely into her eyes.*)

HELLA (*reserved*). I *can't* answer you now, Paul.

PAUL (*visibly relieved*). Very well! If you can not at present . . . There is plenty of time.

HELLA. Isn't there? You will give me time. I should like to put it off only a few days longer.

PAUL (*joyously*). Why as long as you please. Till then I shall be assured of you and meanwhile you will get acclimated?

HELLA. Only a few days, Paul. Possibly I can make a definite proposition to you by that time.

PAUL (*shakes her hands again, happy*). Hella, my clever, unusual Hella! (*He puts his arms around her waist, about to kiss her.*)

HELLA (*with quick resistance*). What *are* you doing, Paul? Don't you see how wet you are?

PAUL. Snow-water! Clear snow-water. What harm will that do! Give me a kiss, Hella!

HELLA (*reluctantly*). You *do* have notions at times! . . . So here is your kiss! (*Extends her cheek to him.*)

PAUL (*embraces her.*) Oh, no! Today I must have something unusual! (*He tries to kiss her mouth.*)

HELLA (*warding him off*). Do stop that, Paul! I beg you urgently!

PAUL (*looks into her eyes*). But why not, Hella? Just for today . . . ! (*His voice is soft and pleading.*)

HELLA (*with her face toward the sofa*). Why Glyszinski is sitting there.

PAUL (*impatiently*). What is Glyszinski to me? It's *surely* all right for a husband and wife to kiss each other.

HELLA. But not before strangers! I can't bear that, Paul!

PAUL (*bitterly*). Calm down! It never happens anyhow! (*He releases her and walks through the hall with great strides*).

HELLA (*shrugging her shoulders*). Because it is really not proper for two people who are as old as we have become. People should become sensible sometime.

PAUL (*with increasing excitement*). You always were! Why, I don't know you any other way.

HELLA. You must have liked it well enough.

PAUL (*bursting out*). Yes I probably did . . . ! At that time! Because I was a fool!

HELLA (*picks up her book again, turns as if to go away*). Now you are becoming abusive! Good-by, I have work to do!

PAUL (*intercepts her*). Hella! I am coming to you with an overflowing heart! I have a yearning to be alone with you, once, only once; I am almost desperate for a heart to heart talk . . .

GLYSZINSKI (*who has silently followed the scene from the sofa, presumably engrossed in his book, but at times has cast over a furtive glance, makes a motion as if to rise*). If I'm disturbing you, you only need to say so . . .

HELLA. Do not be funny, doctor. You do know that I wanted to go to my room some time ago. Please let me pass, Paul!

PAUL (*has retreated, with an angry bow*). You have plenty of room! (*Across to* GLYSZINSKI.) Hella is quite right. There is no longer any occasion for you to

go. (*He goes to the fireplace and sits down facing the fire.*)

HELLA (*remains in the centre of the hall a few moments longer, then takes a step in the direction of* PAUL *and speaks in a changed, gentler voice*). Paul! (PAUL *does not stir*).

HELLA (*urgently*). Paul!

PAUL. That's all right!

HELLA. Oh, is it? Very well! (*She turns away abruptly, goes over toward the right, opens the door and turns around, saying curtly*). I wish to work, so please do not disturb me. (*She goes out.*)

PAUL (*has become restless, gets up and calls*). Hella! (*One can hear how the door is being locked on the other side.*) As you please, then! (*He sits down again*).

GLYSZINSKI (*looking up from his book*). Hella has locked the door.

[PAUL *sets his teeth and is silent. Pause.*]

GLYSZINSKI. Am I disturbing you?

PAUL (*without turning around*). I have already told you, *no!* Not any longer, now!

GLYSZINSKI. So I *have* been disturbing you?

PAUL. I'll leave that to *you.*

GLYSZINSKI. You would like to have me go away?

PAUL. Dear Glyszinski, *don't* ask such stupid questions!

GLYSZINSKI. Well, I *should* have gone long ago . . .

PAUL (*cutting*). Indeed?

GLYSZINSKI. I can see very well how irksome I am to you.

PAUL. You are not at all irksome, dear Glyszinski, neither now nor formerly. You are only funny.

GLYSZINSKI. You two admitted me to your household.

PAUL. Excuse me! *Hella* admitted you.

GLYSZINSKI. That is what I was going to say. Upon Hella's express invitation . . .

PAUL. Correct.

LYSZINSKI. Indeed I may say upon her wish . . .

AUL. Also correct.

LYSZINSKI. I came into your house.

AUL. That was very kind of you.

LYSZINSKI. And so I can leave it only upon her invitation. Not before! I should be offending Hella, and that I cannot take upon myself. I revere her too much for that.

AUL (*cutting*). Sensitive soul that you are!

LYSZINSKI. Of course my views may not agree with all the conventional rules of society, but there are still other, *higher* duties.

AUL (*amused*). And *you* honor them?

LYSZINSKI (*casting a piercing look at* PAUL). Yes, it is my duty to protect Hella.

AUL. Protect Hella? . . . (*He gets up.*) Do you know! One is impelled to feel sorry for you! (*He turns away and walks through the hall.*)

LYSZINSKI. Well!

AUL. Yes, you have no idea how far you are off the track. That's the reason.

LYSZINSKI. Thanks for your sympathy!

AUL. You are badly off the track, and will hardly get on again, unless you are warned in time. Whether or not that will do you any good, is your affair.

LYSZINSKI (*agitated*). But what does all of this mean? I don't understand you.

AUL (*very seriously*). In a word, that means: look out for women who are like Hella! Look out for that ilk! That tells the whole story! The whole story!

LYSZINSKI (*jumps up*). And you expect me to follow that advice?

AUL. Do not follow it, but don't be surprised later on if you find yourself in the position in which I am today. It has taken me ten to twelve years to arrive at it. Half of that time will suffice for you.

GLYSZINSKI. Why that is sheer nonsense! Your position is estimable enough.

PAUL. I am a bankrupt! That's all!

GLYSZINSKI (*greatly excited*). Imagination, pure imagination! You have your position! You have a name in the movement!

PAUL (*bitterly*). Oh yes! This movement!

GLYSZINSKI. I wish I were that far along!

PAUL. Possibly you are, without knowing it. But as for myself, when I was of your age and began to fly the track, the aforesaid *track*, I was quite another fellow! Today as I rode through the snow knee-deep, that became quite clear to me! I saw myself as I had been once upon a time and then realized what had later become of me! All the strength! All the life! All the color! All lost! All gone! . . . Colorless and commonplace! That is the outcome! (*He sinks down in complete collapse.*)

GLYSZINSKI (*very uncomfortably*). And you blame Hella for all that?

HELLA (*a pen behind her ear, puts in her head and calls*). Glyszinski! Doctor! Why don't you come in! I want you to help me write a number of letters. I shall dictate to you. (*Withdraws again.*)

GLYSZINSKI (*with precipitation*). Immediately, madam. (*He runs to the right.*)

PAUL (*raising his finger*). You have been warned!

GLYSZINSKI (*already at the door on the right*). Some other time! I have no time now!

[*Goes off, the door closes again and is bolted on the other side.*]

PAUL (*looks after him, then, after a pause*). He is going the same course! (*Takes a few steps through the hall, remains standing before the portraits on the wall, looks up at them for a long while, breathes deeply and says, only just audibly*): The Warkentins bring no luck! . . . And they *have* no luck! . . .

[*He steps across to the spinet which is open, sits down, and softly strikes a number of chords.* AUNT CLARA *comes in quickly from the right, looks around.*]

PAUL (*sitting at the spinet*). Well, Aunt Clara? (*He lowers his hands from the keys.*)

AUNT CLARA (*cautiously*). It is well that you are here, my boy! (*She approaches.*)

PAUL (*absent-minded*). Is there anything? . . .

AUNT CLARA (*shaking her head*). Why a person can't talk to your wife. And that young man . . . There's something about him too. Where in the world are the two now?

PAUL (*feigning indifference*). There, in the other room, Aunt Clara.

AUNT CLARA. Do you suppose she will hear us?

PAUL. Oh no, Auntie! They are in the green room. The sun-parlor lies between. And then . . . when Hella is working, she doesn't hear anyhow.

AUNT CLARA. Those two! I do say! They just have to stay together the whole day! But I was going to say . . . Laskowskis . . .

PAUL. What about Laskowski?

AUNT CLARA. Wonder whether we ought to send them an announcement?

PAUL. I don't care! Although I do not exactly consider it necessary.

AUNT CLARA. Just on account of the wife.

PAUL. Whose wife?

AUNT CLARA. Well, Mrs. Laskowski. Why, don't you know?

PAUL (*turns around*). Not a thing! Is Laskowski married?

AUNT CLARA. Why, Paul! Didn't he marry Antonie?

PAUL (*recoils*). Antoinette . . .? Our Antoinette? And I am just finding out about that!

AUNT CLARA. Well, I didn't know whether you cared to hear anything about Antonie.

PAUL (*approaches her and speaks to her in an interested manner*). Why, Auntie, one *is* interested in the people who were once near and dear.

AUNT CLARA. Then, you didn't ask about her yesterday!

PAUL. Goodness, Aunt Clara! I didn't *want* to ask! . . . After all, I'm finding out soon enough! . . . Poor Antoinette! . . . Wasn't she able to find any one else? . . .

AUNT CLARA. You had been gone a year and a half, Paul, and then they got married.

PAUL (*depressed*). Well, well . . .! That long ago? Then it has really ceased to be news! How *does* she look? (*Bitterly.*) I suppose quite . . .? (*He makes a significant derogatory gesture.*)

AUNT CLARA. Don't say that, Paul! She can vie with the youngest and most beautiful of them! She is in her very prime now! Just set her over against your wife!

PAUL (*embarrassed*). Well, well! Hella is not exactly obliged to conceal herself, it seems to me.

AUNT CLARA (*eagerly*). But oh, you should see Mrs. Laskowski!

PAUL (*crabbed*). Well, then old Laskowski may thank his stars. How in all the world did Antoinette run into that fellow? I could never *bear* him!

AUNT CLARA. Have you forgotten *every* thing Paul? Why, he was forever after her, even when you were still here.

PAUL. Why, he is the greatest crook on God's green earth!

AUNT CLARA. At first Antonie didn't care a thing in the world for him, but later she took him just the same, when it was all over with you.

PAUL (*disdainfully*). Of course he had his eye on her estate, the sly rogue! I'd vouch for that.

AUNT CLARA (*gleefully*). Her estate, Grosz-Rukkoschin, went to him right at her marriage. You know that belongs to her from her father's side. *You* might have that now, Paul.

PAUL (*interested*). Well, and how do the two get along? He and Antoinette?

AUNT CLARA (*shrugging her shoulders*). Oh, Paul, what do I know about it? They have no children.

PAUL (*relieved*). They haven't any children either? Well!

AUNT CLARA. They did have one, a girl! But they lost her.

PAUL. Lost her . . . Well, well! . . . Hm! Antoinette! . . . Antoinette Rousselle as Mrs. von Laskowski! . . . Could I have dreamed such a thing when I was a sophomore with old Heliodor! (*He shakes his head, burdened with memories, then with a sudden change.*) Well, of course, we shall send the Laskowskis an announcement. We'll attend to that at once! (*Starts to go.*)

AUNT CLARA (*holds him by the arm*). Never mind, Paul! I *have* sent it. Yesterday. I was certain it would be all right with you.

PAUL (*forced to smile*). Well, what do you think of Aunt Clara! . . .

AUNT CLARA. It's only on account of the neighbors. Now that you are here and they live right next to us, if we should not even invite them to the funeral. . . .

PAUL (*absent-minded*). Yes, yes, quite right!

AUNT CLARA (*searchingly*). For you'll have to observe a bit of neighborliness with the estate-owners around here, my boy . . .

PAUL (*warding off*). Oh, Aunt Clara, here's the same old question again!

AUNT CLARA. Now really, Paul, don't you know yet what you are going to do, whether you intend to remain?

PAUL (*very seriously*). Aunt Clara! I shall *never* be able to induce Hella. That is becoming clearer and clearer to me!

AUNT CLARA (*bolt upright*). If Ellernhof is sold, I shall not survive it! I have been here thirty-three years! I have carried you all in my arms, you and your brothers and sisters. All of the rest are dead. You are still here, Paul. I closed your mother's eyes for

her. I witnessed the death of your father. In all of my days I have known only Ellernhof. At the cemetery I've selected a place for myself where all of them are lying. Shall I go away now at the very end? At least, wait until I am dead!

PAUL (*passionately*). Don't make it so desperately hard for me, Aunt Clara!

AUNT CLARA (*looking at the walls*). Here they all hang on the walls, those who were once active here . . .

PAUL (*follows her eyes*). Do you hear? The door-bell. (*The door-bell rings.*)

AUNT CLARA. Callers.

PAUL. Callers! Again!

AUNT CLARA. Probably to express their condolences.

PAUL (*impatiently*). Just at the most inopportune moment!

AUNT CLARA (*listening*). I shouldn't be surprised if the Laskowskis were coming!

PAUL (*giving a start*). Antoinette . . .? Why, that . . .! And I in my riding boots! Do see who it is!

AUNT CLARA. Why, of course it is! I can hear him from here . . . Shall I bring them in, Paul?

PAUL. Can't we take them somewhere else?

AUNT CLARA. Where, pray tell? (*She goes to the door on the right.*)

PAUL (*goes to the door on the left, knocks*). Hella, open the door! I want to change my clothes. There are callers.

AUNT CLARA. Why, never mind, you are all right!

PAUL (*turns away, resigned to his fate*). It wouldn't do any good anyhow. Hella does not hear me. Go ahead then! Bring them right along.

[AUNT CLARA *opens the door at the right and goes out. Conversation outside becomes audible.*]

PAUL (*also comes over to the right, seems to be in great agitation, controls himself nervously, steps upon the threshold at the right and addresses those about to*

enter). This way, if you please. (*He steps aside for* ANTOINETTE *and* LASKOWSKI, *and makes a short bow*). We are very glad to see you!

LASKOWSKI (*seizes both of his hands and shakes them a number of times*). Glad to see you, old chap! Think of seeing you again. (*He and* ANTOINETTE *have taken off their wraps outside. He wears a black morning coat and black gloves.*)

PAUL (*reserved*). Unfortunately on a sad occasion!

ANTOINETTE (*in a black gown, simple but elegant*). Be assured of our heartfelt sympathy, doctor! (*She extends the tips of her fingers to him.*)

PAUL (*somewhat formally*). Thank you very much, madam! (*His eyes are fastened upon her.*)

AUNT CLARA (*is the last to enter. She closes the door behind her*). Will you not be seated? Antonie, please take the sofa!

PAUL. Yes indeed, madam, please! Or would you prefer to sit at the fire? You have been riding.

ANTOINETTE. Thank you! I am quite warm. I'll sit down here. (*She sits down on the sofa and lets her eyes roam about.*)

LASKOWSKI. Think of my wife sitting at the fire! It would have to come to a pretty pass! One who knocks about in the open all day long, like her! (*He sits down on the chair to the left of the sofa.*)

PAUL (*under a spell*). Do you do that, madam?

ANTOINETTE. Just as it comes! A little horseback, skating . . . Whatever winter pastimes there may be!

PAUL (*who is still standing at his chair*). And in summer?

LASKOWSKI. Oh, in summer something else is doing again! Then there is rowing, fishing and swimming to beat the band!

ANTOINETTE. Fortunately we have the lake right near our place.

PAUL (*has been speaking privately to* AUNT CLARA). Very well, Auntie, bring us that!

ANTOINETTE. Don't go to any trouble, Miss Clara. We can't stay long.

LASKOWSKI (*winks*). Well, well, we'll remain a *bit* longer. I'll still have to go to the inn to take a look at that gelding.

PAUL (*beckons to his aunt*). So bring it along!

AUNT CLARA. Very well, boysie, I'm going. (*Goes off at the right.*)

PAUL (*sits down in the chair opposite the sofa and becomes absent-minded again*). So you have a lake? Where *is* it? Surely not at Klonowken?

ANTOINETTE. If we only did have that at Klonowken! We have nothing at all there.

LASKOWSKI (*joining in with laughter*). Heaven knows! The fox and the wolf do the social stunt there!

ANTOINETTE. The lake is at Rukkoschin.

LASKOWSKI (*informing him*). That is the estate that my dearie brought to me.

PAUL (*abruptly*). Yes, yes.

LASKOWSKI (*laughing*). That's a different layout from the sandy blowouts of Klonowken! Prime soil! And a forest, I tell you, cousin! Over two thousand acres! One trunk as fine as another! Each one fit for a ship's mast! If I ever have them cut down! That will put grease into the pan! Yes, yes, Rukkoschin is a catch that's worth while. We did a good job of that, didn't we, dearie? (*He laughs at* ANTOINETTE *slyly.*)

PAUL. I suppose, dear Laskowski, that no one has ever doubted your slyness.

LASKOWSKI (*strikes his shoulder*). Do you see, Doc., now you say so yourself, and at school you gave me the laugh. That fool Laskowski, so you thought, he'll never get beyond pounding sand in a rat-hole. Have I come up a bit in your eyes? How's that, old boy? Shake hands. Pretty damned long since we have met! (*He extends his hand to* PAUL, *who does not seem to notice it.*)

ANTOINETTE (*who has been biting her lips and looking into space during the words of her husband, suddenly interrupts*). We received the announcement this morning, Mr. Warkentin. We thank you very much.

PAUL (*reserved*). It was no more than our duty, madam.

LASKOWSKI. Yes, we were very glad, my wife and I . . .

ANTOINETTE (*quickly*). Not to be forgotten! . . .

LASKOWSKI. You hit the nail on the head, that's what you did, dearie! *You* go on and talk. A fellow like myself isn't so handy with his tongue! But he feels it just the same!

PAUL (*grimly*). Rather sudden, was it not, madam?

ANTOINETTE. The best thing that one can wish for!

PAUL. Do you think so? I don't know.

LASKOWSKI. Of course. Heart failure's the thing to have!

ANTOINETTE. It grieved me very much.

PAUL. Yes, madam.

ANTOINETTE. You see, he was my guardian.

PAUL. I know it.

ANTOINETTE. Of course we had not seen each other for some time . . .

LASKOWSKI. Goodness, dearie, that's the way it goes sometimes! This fellow's busy and then that fellow's busy . . . It's not like in the city. But everybody knows how you feel about it, just the same. And then if you do meet in the city, or at the stockyards, or somewhere else, the jollification is twice as big. Just lately I met your father in just that way. It's not been four weeks. Met him at the station just as I was going to town. And the old gent crossed my path and acted as if he didn't see me. It was right at the ticket window. Of course, I called him! Good morning, major, says I! Howdy? Chipper, and up and coming as ever? Oh, says he, not particularly! Those very words! I can still see him as he stood there!

ANTOINETTE (*incredulously*). Why you didn't tell me a thing about that.

LASKOWSKI. Guess I forgot to. Who'd think it would be the last time. When I heard that he was dead, day before yesterday, it came to me again. Then we rode in the same compartment and he kept telling me a lot about you, Doc.

PAUL (*sarcastically*). Really?

LASKOWSKI. He was pretty much bothered, what would become of the place, when he'd be dead and gone . . .

PAUL. You don't say!

LASKOWSKI. On my honor, Doc.! Expect me to fib to you. Of course I talked him out of it, and told him not to bother about it. First of all that it wasn't up to him *yet*, and if it was, *I* was still in the ring.

PAUL. Very kind of you.

LASKOWSKI. With all my heart! You and me, Doc., h'm? We understand each other! We'll come to terms all right. Old chap! Old crony! How tickled I am to see you right here before me again! How often I have said if Paul was only here now. Didn't I, dearie?

ANTOINETTE (*gesture of impatience*). Yes, yes.

LASKOWSKI. Well, what have you been doing all this time, Doc.?

PAUL. All kinds of things.

LASKOWSKI. Regular old Socrates. It makes a fellow's wheels buzz to think of what he's got in his head all the time! Do you remember, old chap, how you used to help me out when we were juniors?

PAUL. Sophomores, dear Laskowski! You failed to make junior standing.

LASKOWSKI (*strikes his fist on the table, in great glee*). Damn it all! Did you remember that? I see, old chap, that a fellow has to be on his guard with you.

PAUL (*with a determined look*). If you think . . .

LASKOWSKI. These fellows from Berlin. They are up to snuff! That's the place! If they ever come out into

From the Painting by Robert Weise

the country, look out, boys. They'll not leave a shirt on your back! Guess you made a good deal of spondulics in Berlin, didn't you, Doc.? (*He goes through with the gesture of counting money.*)

AUL (*cutting*). Why?

ASKOWSKI. Goodness, a fellow will ask about that. You don't need it, of course. Ellernhof is worth sixty, seventy thousand dollars any day, and a fellow can live off of that. If you can only find a buyer . . .

'AUL. I haven't the least desire, dear Laskowski.

ASKOWSKI. It's a hard thing too, now-a-days. Buyers are scarce and times are hard for the farmer.

[AUNT CLARA *comes from the right, carrying a tray with a bottle of wine and glasses.*]

NTOINETTE. You have gone to all this trouble, after all, Miss Clara.

UNT CLARA. Not at all worth mentioning! (*Sets the things on the table.*)

ASKOWSKI (*examines the wine-bottle*). Why, what have you brought here, Miss?

'AUL. You drink port, don't you, madam?

ASKOWSKI (*affectionately*). If you don't care for it, dearie, I drink for you.

NTOINETTE. You *may* pour me one glass. (*She holds out her glass, which* PAUL *fills.*)

ASKOWSKI You're sure it won't hurt you, dearie?

NTOINETTE. Why should it? I drink on other occasions.

ASKOWSKI. Because you are always getting a headache.

NTOINETTE (*looks at him*). I?

ASKOWSKI. Now don't get mad right off! Can't a fellow crack a joke? Don't you see that it's a joke? Drink ahead, dearie! I'm drinking too. And then I must be going too.

'AUL (*who has filled all the glasses*). Must you; where?

ASKOWSKI (*raises his glass and empties it*). Of a forenoon, there's nothing up to a glass of port.

'AUL. Why don't you drink, Aunt Clara! (*He also drinks.*)

AUNT CLARA. Oh, I don't care much for wine, my boy, as you may remember. (*She sips a little.*)

LASKOWSKI (*to* ANTOINETTE). Well, did you like it, dearie?

PAUL. May I give you some more, madam?

ANTOINETTE. No, thank you. It would go to my head.

LASKOWSKI (*pushes his glass over*). *I'll* take another glass. Then I must be going. (*Looks at his watch.*) It's a quarter of eleven.

PAUL (*fills it*). What else have you in mind?

LASKOWSKI. Well, since it just fits in, we being here today, I just want to go over to the inn. They've advertised a gelding there. Take a look at him. If he can be had cheap . . . Haven't put one over on anybody for some time! (*He laughs, empties the glass and holds it up before him.*) Your old gent did invest in a cellar! There ain't a thing, Doc., that I envy you as much as that cellar! (*He gets up.*)

ANTOINETTE. I shall wait till you return. Come back soon!

LASKOWSKI. On the spot, dearie. I'll only take a vertical whisky over at the inn! Good-by, dearie! Good-by, Doc.! (*He goes out at the right.*)

AUNT CLARA (*has also risen, with a sly look*). Mercy, my dinner! You can't depend upon these girls! First thing, it'll be burned. (*She hastens out at the right.*)

ANTOINETTE. Did you not bring Mrs. Warkentin with you, Doctor?

PAUL (*nervously*). Yes, Auntie, please tell Lene to go around and tell my wife we have callers. This door is locked. She cannot get through here. (*He has risen and walked over to the right.*)

AUNT CLARA (*going out*). Very well, Paul, I shall see to it.

[*Goes off. Pause.* PAUL *stands at the fireplace and stares into the fire.* ANTOINETTE *has leaned back on the sofa and is gazing into space.*]

PAUL (*with an effort*). You are not cold, are you, madam? Or I will put on some more wood.

ANTOINETTE (*without stirring*). Not on my account! I am accustomed to the cold.

PAUL (*forced*). Strange! As *hardened* as all that.

ANTOINETTE. Completely!

PAUL (*takes a step toward her*). Antoinette . . .?

ANTOINETTE (*motionless*). Doctor?

PAUL (*painfully*). Once my name was Paul. Don't you remember?

ANTOINETTE. I have forgotten it!

PAUL (*controls himself*). Well then, madam, may I speak to you?

ANTOINETTE. Will you not call your wife?

PAUL. May I not speak to you?

ANTOINETTE. I don't know what you could have to say.

PAUL. Something that concerns only you and me and not another soul!

ANTOINETTE (*gets up*). I do not *care* to hear it. (*Takes a few steps into the hall.*)

PAUL (*seizes her hand*). Antoinette!

ANTOINETTE (*frees herself*). Don't!

PAUL. Then why have you come?

ANTOINETTE. Don't, I tell you!

PAUL. Then why have you come, I ask of you?

ANTOINETTE (*stands with her back to him, blurts out*). They fairly dragged me here!

PAUL. So you did not come of your own accord?

ANTOINETTE. No! . . . I should *never* have come!

PAUL. Antoinette . . . Is that the truth?

[ANTOINETTE *presses her hand to her face and is silent.*]

PAUL (*with bowed head*). Then to be sure . . .!

ANTOINETTE. Why in the world doesn't your wife come in? (*She walks toward the window.*)

PAUL. Very well! Let her come! (*He bites his lips and turns away.*)

LENE (*appears in the door at the left*). Mr. Warkentin . . .?

PAUL (*startled*). What is it?

LENE. Mrs. Warkentin says that she has no time now, she'll come directly.

PAUL. Very well! . . . You may go!

LENE. Thank you, Mr. Warkentin! (*She casts a glance at the two and goes out. Short pause.*)

PAUL (*with grim humor*). As you see, it is not to be, madam!

ANTOINETTE (*stands at the window with her back toward the hall*). It would seem so. (*Presses her face against the panes.*)

PAUL (*walks to and fro, then approaches her*). I have had to endure much, Antoinette, very much!

ANTOINETTE (*suppressed*). Possibly I have too.

PAUL. Why, Antoinette, you are weeping? (*He stands behind her and tries to look into her face.*)

ANTOINETTE (*wards him off*). I? Not at all!

PAUL (*heavily*). You are weeping, Antoinette!

ANTOINETTE (*sinks down*). I can't help it. (*She surrenders to her pain, but quietly and softly, making her appear all the more touching.*)

PAUL (*kindly*). Come, madam! Let me conduct you to the sofa. (*About to take her arm.*)

ANTOINETTE (*refusing*). I can go *alone*. Why do you concern yourself about me at all?

PAUL. Antoinette! Don't be stubborn at this moment! Our time is short. Who knows whether we shall ever speak to each other again as we now do. (*He leads her forward a short distance.*)

ANTOINETTE. All the better!

PAUL. Our time is awfully short. I *cannot* let you go away so! We must make use of the moment! (*Bitterly.*) The moment that will possibly never return. (*He has slowly led her to the front of the stage.*)

ANTOINETTE (*frees herself violently*). Do permit me to go by myself! I do not need you! I need no one!

PAUL (*bitterly*). Very well! I shall not molest you! As you please!

ANTOINETTE (*sits down in the chair at the left of the sofa, seems composed again*). You see I am quite calm. It was only a temporary indisposition.

PAUL (*coaxing*). May I sit down near you, Antoinette?

ANTOINETTE. What have you to say to me?

PAUL (*sits down in the chair before her, looks at her squarely, then, after a moment of devoted contemplation*). I am forced to look at you, Antoinette! Pardon me! I am forced to look at you again and again!

ANTOINETTE. Do save up these compliments for your wife, doctor!

PAUL (*with growing excitement*). No compliments, Antoinette! The moment is too precious!

ANTOINETTE. Then why don't you spare yourself the trouble?

PAUL. Didn't you feel it, the very moment you came in, Antoinette; I *could* not keep away from you.

ANTOINETTE. Quite flattering!

PAUL. Antoinette! Now you must listen to me to the very end.

ANTOINETTE. Goodness! What do you expect of me?

PAUL. Or you should not have come!

ANTOINETTE. Why in the world *did* I do it?

PAUL (*fervently, but in an undertone*). Antoinette! You are so wonderful! More wonderful than I have ever seen you before!

ANTOINETTE (*sarcastically*). Oh, indeed . . .! Possibly you are even sorry.

PAUL (*straightens up, harshly*). For shame, madam. Such expressions are not suited to you! Leave them to others!

ANTOINETTE (*passionately*). Your own fault! You have brought me to this!

PAUL (*painfully*). You have become unfeeling, Antoinette!

ANTOINETTE. I am simply no longer that stupid little creature that you can wind around your finger as once upon a time. Do you still remember that Christmas Eve, Doctor Warkentin?

PAUL. I remember it all, Antoinette. Why on that evening my life was decided.

ANTOINETTE. So was mine. In this very hall. I sat at this very place and you before me as now. There *is* such a thing as providence. I have always believed in that! But now I see it with my own eyes. God in heaven will not be mocked! On my knees I have prayed to him . . . !

PAUL (*frightened*). Antoinette!

ANTOINETTE (*furiously*). On my knees I prayed for him to punish you.

PAUL. Toinette, you are mad! What awful injury did I inflict upon you?

ANTOINETTE (*scornfully*). You upon me? Oh, none at all! Did you know about me at all? You scorned me! What, that stupid little thing wants me, the great man! Who am I and what is she! Off with her.

PAUL. Toinette!

ANTOINETTE (*filled with hatred*). Yes, off with her. And I did throw myself away! I knew all the time it would spell misfortune for me if I married this . . . this man.

PAUL (*starts up*). Is that the way matters stand?

ANTOINETTE. Yes, indeed, that's the way they stand. I don't think of making a secret of it. The whole world knows it. It is shouted from the house-tops!

PAUL (*clenches his fists*). The dog!

ANTOINETTE. It's easy for you to use strong terms now. You hounded me into it! I owe it all to you. But one consolation has remained for me. I have become unhappy. But so are you! And that is why I have come.

PAUL (*straightens up*). What does this mean, Antoinette?

ANTOINETTE. Heavens! Simple enough! You do take an interest in the woman that has been preferred to you. You would like to make the acquaintance of such a marvel.

PAUL (*offended*). You are malicious, madam!

NTOINETTE. Not at all. I only wanted to see, with my own eyes, how happy you are. But I am quite sufficiently informed. One only needs to take a look at you.

AUL (*painfully*). Are you satisfied now?

NTOINETTE (*from the bottom of her heart*). Yes.

AUL. Are you compelled to detest me?

NTOINETTE. Do you expect me to thank you?

AUL (*fervently*). Does it really make you happy to talk to me in this manner, Antoinette?

NTOINETTE. Happy or not, what I have vowed before the altar, I shall not fail to keep.

AUL (*earnestly and sadly*). I am the last person to hinder you, Toinette! But I surely may look at you? Will you forbid that?

NTOINETTE (*struggling with herself*). *Don't* talk to me in this manner!

AUL (*excited*). Just look into your face, Antoinette, the few moments that remain! Stamp upon my mind how much I have lost! Look into your eyes, just once more! Into your wonderful eyes!

NTOINETTE (*jumps up*). Don't talk to me in this manner, I say. I haven't deserved it!

AUL (*has also risen, seizes her hand*). Antoinette, I have found none of the things that I was seeking. I have been miserably deceived! Are you satisfied now?

[ANTOINETTE *sinks back into her chair, begins to sob spasmodically.*]

AUL (*wildly*). Why aren't you glad? (*He strides through the hall.*)

[ANTOINETTE *chokes down her sobs.*]

AUL (*comes back again, bows down to her*). Weep, Antoinette! Weep! I wish *I* could. (*He softly presses a kiss upon her hair*). [*Silence.*]

NTOINETTE (*jumps up*). I must go! Where is my husband? I must have fresh air! My head! (*She looks crazed.*)

PAUL (*takes her arm*). Yes, fresh air, Toinette, there w shall feel less constraint. It is fine outside, the sno is falling. Everything is white. Everything is ol Just as both of us have become, Toinette.

ANTOINETTE (*leaning on him*). I am so afraid! So terribl afraid!

PAUL (*leading her to the door*). You will feel better. Sno is soothing. Come and I will tell you about my lif Possibly you will forgive me then, Antoinette? (*H looks at her imploringly and extends his hand to her*)

ANTOINETTE (*hesitates a moment, then opening her eye widely she lays her hand in his*). Possibly! . . .

PAUL (*happy*). Thank you, Toinette! Thank you! . . And now come.

ANTOINETTE (*on his arm, sadly*). Where shall we go?

PAUL. To the park, Toinette, to the brook, do you remem ber, to the alders?

ANTOINETTE (*nods*). To the alders, I remember.

PAUL. Out into the snow, to seek our childhood.

[*He slowly leads her out at the right.*]

ACT III

The same hall as on the preceding days. The two corners in the fore ground, on the right the fireplace with its chairs, on the left the sof and other furniture are both separated from the centre and backgroun of the hall by means of a rectangular arrangement of oleanders in pots thus affording two separate cozy corners, between whose high border of oleander a somewhat narrow passage leads to the backgroun A banquet board in the form of a horseshoe, the sides of which run to the rear and are hidden by the oleanders. The centre, forming the head of the board, is plainly visible from the passage. It is almos noon. Dim light, reflected from the snow outside, comes in through th middle window of the back wall, a view of which is afforded through th opening in the centre. The snowflakes flutter down drearily as on th previous day. The fire now and then casts a red light upon the oleanders, which separate the space surrounding the fireplace from the back ground. AUNT CLARA, *in mourning as before, and* LENE, *also dressed in black, are busy at the table, which has been set. They move to and fro arranging plates, glasses and bottles. After a moment.*

AUNT CLARA (*comes forward in the direction of the passage, inspects the whole arrangement and speaks to* LENE *who is occupied in the background, where she cannot be seen*). Are all of the knives and forks properly arranged back there?

LENE (*not visible*). Everything's in order, Miss Clara.

AUNT CLARA. Why, then we are through.

LENE. They can come right along now.

AUNT CLARA. I can't help but think that it's time for the bell. (*The old clock in the corridor outside begins to strike.*)

LENE (*has come forward*). It's striking twelve.

AUNT CLARA. You're certain, are you, that the roast is being basted properly?

LENE. Oh, Lizzie's looking after things.

AUNT CLARA. The sermon seems to be pretty long.

LENE. Oh, he can never find his finish, Miss Clara.

AUNT CLARA. Let him talk, for all I care! Only I might have put off the dinner.

LENE (*listens*). Now the bell is ringing. (*Distant, indistinct tones of a church bell are heard.*)

AUNT CLARA (*also listens*). Yes, they are ringing. Then it is over. (*She folds her hands as if in prayer.*)

LENE (*timidly*). Now the coffin's in the ground, ain't it, Miss Clara?

AUNT CLARA (*murmurs*). God grant him eternal peace!

LENE (*also with hands folded*). Amen!

AUNT CLARA (*continues murmuring*). And light everlasting shine for him!

LENE (*as before*). Amen!

AUNT CLARA (*partly to herself*). I *should* have been glad to pay him the last honor, but it *was* impossible. What would have become of the roast? We shall see each other in the next world anyhow. It will not be *very* long!

LENE (*comforting her*). Oh, Miss Clara.

AUNT CLARA (*seizes her arm*). Don't stand there! Do your work! They will surely be here directly. (*Counts the places.*) Six . . . eight . . . twelve . . . sixteen . . . eighteen . . . twenty . . . twenty-two . . .

LENE. That's the number. There are eight sleighs.

AUNT CLARA. Go and open the door of the green room!

LENE (*goes off to the left*). What *will* Mrs. Warkentin say to that?

AUNT CLARA. *I* will attend to that. It can't be helped today. We shall have to use the rooms for our coffee later.

LENE (*returns*). She'll make a nice fuss!

AUNT CLARA. Off with you now. They are coming. Take the ladies and gentlemen into the front rooms until we have the dinner on the table. Then you can go and call them.

LENE. Very well, Miss Clara. (*Quickly off to the right.*)

[*Short pause, during which* AUNT CLARA *stands listening. Then* HELLA *enters from the right, dressed in black.*]

HELLA (*with a quick glance to the left, then to* AUNT CLARA *who has retreated to the background*). What is the matter with my room? Why are the doors open?

AUNT CLARA. The guests certainly must have some place where they can relax a bit, later on.

HELLA (*nonplussed*). In my rooms?

AUNT CLARA. They surely can't sit around in this one place the whole afternoon. They must take their coffee *some*where

HELLA (*from the left*). Why I *do* say . . . ! Really! All of my books are gone!

AUNT CLARA (*indifferently*). I put things to rights a bit, madam. Why I *couldn't* leave them as they were. I took the books upstairs.

HELLA. Upstairs! Very well, then that's where *I* will go. (*Starts out toward the right.*)

AUL (*enters and runs into* HELLA). Where are you going?

ELLA. I am going upstairs.

AUL. *Where* are you going?

ELLA. Upstairs. I *can't* find a nook down *here* today where I might rest.

AUL. So you really refuse to dine with us?

ELLA (*places her hand on his arm*). Spare me the agony, Paul! You know I can't endure so many strangers. It will give me a headache.

AUL. Stay a short time at least! Show that much consideration!

ELLA (*retreats a step*). Consideration . . . No one shows *me* any consideration!

AUL (*pacing up and down*). Nice mess, when not even the nearest relatives . . .

ELLA. Why, you are to be present.

AUL. But you must be present! I desire it, Hella!

ELLA. And what if I simply *cannot?*

AUL (*plants himself before her*). Why not?

ELLA. Because I cannot. Because I hate these feeds!

AUL (*more calmly*). That is correct. So do I! But what can we do about it? It *is* the custom.

ELLA. Custom, Paul, custom! . . . Have we founded our life upon old customs?

AUL (*embittered*). If we only had!

ELLA (*looks at him sharply*). Do you think so?

AUL. Yes, possibly we should have fared better.

ELLA (*very emphatically*). And then, my dear, I will tell you one thing more. You are compelling me to do so.

AUL. And that is?

ELLA. I don't care to lie.

AUL. What do you mean by that?

ELLA. I don't care to feign, to these people, feelings that are entirely absent. That is why I am going upstairs.

AUL (*very calmly*). Does that refer to . . . the dead?

HELLA. Yes, it does! I did not know *him* and he did not know *me!* Did not care to know me. What obligations remain for me? None at all.

PAUL. Are you serious?

HELLA (*bolt upright*). In all seriousness. Now it is out.

PAUL (*quite calm*). Very well, then go!

HELLA. I'll see you later. (*She goes toward the right.*)

PAUL (*struggles for composure, then suddenly*). Hella! For *my* sake . . . Do *not* go. Stay here!

HELLA (*turns to him*). No, Paul, one should not force himself to do such things. Put the responsibility upon your father! I am not to blame. I am only acting as I must. You would do the same. [*Off at the right.*]

PAUL (*beside himself*). It's well that you are reminding me of that.

AUNT CLARA (*approaches*). Shall I remove your wife's plate?

PAUL. Yes, take the plate away.

AUNT CLARA. Have you seen the Laskowskis?

PAUL. Yes, at the cemetery, Auntie. I shall go now and call the guests. (*Goes off.*)

[AUNT CLARA *walks toward the right, shaking her head, then pulls the bell.*]

LENE (*comes in from the right, behind the scene*). What is it, Miss Clara?

AUNT CLARA. Have the soup brought in! It will take me some time to fill all of the plates, anyhow.

LENE. Very well!

AUNT CLARA. Now where are you to serve? And where is the coachman to serve? You haven't forgotten?

LENE. I am to serve on the right and the coachman on the left. Is that right?

AUNT CLARA. Yes, you may go! And don't forget, all serving is to be done by way of the green room! Be sure not to come in from this side! [LENE *goes off.*]

[AUNT CLARA *retires to the background, where she is occupied for some time, without being very much in evidence. The door at the right is opened.*]

PAUL (*still hidden to view*). Come in, ladies and gentlemen! In this way! (VON TIEDEMANN, MRS. VON TIEDEMANN, DR. BODENSTEIN, RAABE, *father and son,* MERTENS, KUNZE, MRS. BOROWSKI, SCHNAASE, MRS. SCHNAASE, JOSUPEIT, LICENTIATE SCHROCK *and others enter and dispose themselves in groups before and behind the Oleanders.*)

RAABE, SR. (*puts his hand up to his side*). I don't know, but that cemetery put a stitch into my side.

SCHNAASE. Yes, that was a nasty, cold snow. If we only get something to eat soon! . . . So we can warm up!

VON TIEDEMANN. Ought to be a bit careful of yourself at your age, Mr. Raabe!

RAABE. Why, how old *am* I? Seventy!

VON TIEDEMANN. Not worth mentioning, eh? Prime of life! . . . How old *was* Warkentin?

SCHNAASE. Why we just heard about that in the sermon, sixty-two!

VON TIEDEMANN. Not very old!

RAABE. Yes, that's the way they go . . .

SCHNAASE. To the grand army, eh Raabe, old boy? Who knows when we will get our orders.

RAABE. It will be our turn next.

VON TIEDEMANN. Don't say that! It is not a matter of age! Look at Warkentin, did he give evidence of his end?

SCHNAASE. The affair with his son put him over, or he would be here today.

VON TIEDEMANN (*looks around*). Why, where is the young man?

SCHNAASE. Pretty nice fellow in other respects!

VON TIEDEMANN. He will have a deuce of a time if he intends to farm here. You can't pick that up helter skelter. Has any one heard? Does he intend to take it on? Or is he going to sell?

[*He turns toward the rear. Meanwhile* LASKOWSKI, ANTOINETTE, PAUL, AND GLYSZINSKI *have entered from the right and have joined a group of guests in the background.*]

RAABE. In the old days the son always followed in the footsteps of his father. The son of a land-owner became a land-owner. That's all out of style now. Everybody goes to school.

SCHNAASE. Well, your son is doing that very thing, Raabe.

RAABE, JR. (*has come forward*). Good morning, Mr. Schnaase!

SCHNAASE. Good morning, brother student!

RAABE, JR. Well, pa?

RAABE. Well, my son?

SCHNAASE. Keeping right after beerology, young man?

RAABE, JR. Purty well, thanks! A fellow guzzles his way through.

SCHNAASE. How many semesters does this make, Mr. Raabe?

RAABE, JR. Mebbie you'd better not ask about that.

RAABE. How many semesters? Twelve! Isn't that it, my son?

RAABE, JR. Astoundingly correct!

SCHNAASE. Then I suppose you'll tackle the examinations one of these days, Mr. Raabe?

RAABE, JR. There's plenty of time.

RAABE. Just let him study his fill! I'm not at all in favor of too much hurry! He'll get office and emoluments soon enough.

SCHNAASE. I know one thing, *my* boy will not get into a gymnasium! The agricultural school for him, till he can qualify for the one year's service and off with him. No big notions for him!

RAABE (*holds his side*). Outch, there's my stitch again!

RAABE, JR. Take a whisky, pa! Shall I get us a couple?

RAABE. A few fingers might not do any harm.

SCHNAASE. *Have* the girl before you kiss her, according to Lehmann.*

RAABE, JR. What'll you bet? I can get some! (*He hastens to the rear.*)

RAABE. Divvel of a fellow!

SCHNAASE. Well now, I'd just like to see. (*Both of them follow* RAABE, JR. *to the rear.*)

MRS. VON TIEDEMANN and MRS. SCHNAASE *come from the left arm in arm.*

MRS. VON TIEDEMANN (*with a glance at the arrangements*). That is not exactly extraordinary.

MRS. SCHNAASE. Oh, I don't know, Elizabeth, I find it quite pretty.

MRS. VON TIEDEMANN. And the wife does not seem to be much in evidence.

MRS. SCHNAASE. Yes, she seems a bit high toned.

MRS. VON TIEDEMANN. *Quite a bit.* I wonder what kind of notions *she* has about the society that she has encountered here!

MRS. SCHNAASE. Do you think they will stay here?

MRS. VON TIEDEMANN. Such creatures blow in from Berlin, puff up like a turkey gobbler. I'd hate to know about her past!

MRS. SCHNAASE. Mrs. Laskowski looks pretty interesting today.

MRS. VON TIEDEMANN. Do you think so? Well, perhaps she has her reasons.

MRS. SCHNAASE. You don't say! Do tell.

MRS. VON TIEDEMANN. Don't you know about it at all?

MRS. SCHNAASE. Why no, what? I don't get out very much, you know.

MRS. VON TIEDEMANN. It *was* before your day. You were not here then. I have a dim recollection, when I was quite a young girl.

MRS. SCHNAASE (*all ear, seizes her arm*). Is it possible? What was it?

* Nickname of Emperor William I, who according to popular report took an interest in girls.

MRS. VON TIEDEMANN (*subdued*). She had an affair with him . . .

MRS. SCHNAASE. With whom, pray tell?

MRS. VON TIEDEMANN. The *man* with whom she is standing there.

MRS. SCHNAASE. Why that is young Mr. Warkentin.

MRS. VON TIEDEMANN. Pst. They are coming. (*Quite subdued.*) Later she married her husband out of spite, because she did not get him!

MRS. SCHNAASE (*squints curiously at* ANTOINETTE). To think that she would still talk to him!

MRS. VON TIEDEMANN. Heavens, what does she care! (*To* DR. BODENSTEIN, *who is quietly conversing with* MERTENS *at the fireplace.*) Doctor, just a word!

DR. BODENSTEIN. At your service, madam! (*He straightens up promptly and hastens to her.*)

MRS. VON TIEDEMANN. I only wanted to ask about a trifling matter, Doctor.

DR. BODENSTEIN. I shall be *delighted,* madam.

MRS. VON TIEDEMANN. But no one must hear us. (*Both disappear to the rear.*)

MERTENS (*has also stepped out from the recess of the fireplace, to* MRS. SCHNAASE). If you are willing to put up with me for the present, madam?

MRS. SCHNAASE. Oh, thank you very much! But I might . . . .

MERTENS. Please, please, madam! May I offer you my arm? (*He takes her arm.*)

JOSUPEIT (*has rushed up to the two from the background*). Too late! Just my luck! *I* was about to report!

MERTENS. You will have to get up a bit earlier the next time, my dear fellow; *I* shall take you to the table, madam.

JOSUPEIT (*from the other side*). Take me to the table dear, good madam! I'll tell you something quite interesting too.

PAUL (*has come forward with* ANTOINETTE). We shall eat immediately, Mr. Mertens.

MERTENS. Please, please, as concerns me! (*He escorts* MRS. SCHNAASE.)

JOSUPEIT (*catches sight of* PAUL, *suddenly assumes a funereal air*). My heartfelt sympathy, Mr. Warkentin! (*He seizes his hand and shakes it.*)

PAUL (*reserved*). I thank you!

JOSUPEIT (*is silent for a moment, then continues*). Another man of honor gone. (PAUL *nods silently.* JOSUPEIT *again after a brief silence.*) Terribly sudden!

PAUL (*nods again and says*). But I must not detain you, Mr. Josupeit!

JOSUPEIT. Once more, my heartfelt sympathy!

[JOSUPEIT *and the rest go off to the rear.*]

PAUL (*to* ANTOINETTE *who has stepped forward to the right near the fireplace*). You see, madam, that's the way of it! Just back from the cemetery. One buried forever, and the next moment all of their thoughts somewhere else. Joyous and of good cheer.

ANTOINETTE (*stares into the fire, bitterly*). Yes, that's the way of it!

PAUL. Life rolls on merrily. The dead are dead. We shall have the same fate some day, madam.

ANTOINETTE. Of course we shall. It is immaterial to me.

PAUL (*looks at her*). Really?

ANTOINETTE. It does not matter to me, whether it comes today or tomorrow. Sometime I shall have to go! So the quicker the better. It is all over with me!

PAUL. Antoinette!

ANTOINETTE. You may believe me, I am quite serious!

PAUL (*completely absorbed, as he looks at her*). How calmly you say that! In the very bloom of life! I cannot think of you thus.

ANTOINETTE. How?

PAUL. Cold and dead.

ANTOINETTE. But I can. Very well indeed. I am so now!

PAUL. That isn't true, Antoinette. Your eyes tell a different story!

ANTOINETTE (*shrugging her shoulders*). Never mind my eyes!

PAUL. But I can't help it. I must look into them! I feel as if I must find something there.

ANTOINETTE (*turning away*). Don't go to any trouble!

PAUL. Indeed, indeed, Antoinette!

ANTOINETTE. What in the world *could* you find?

PAUL. . . . Possibly my lost life?

ANTOINETTE (*excited*). Why do you speak so to me, Paul?

PAUL. Do I hear it from your lips, Paul, Paul, as of old?

ANTOINETTE (*frightened*). Paul! Paul! Desist!

PAUL. It has been a long time since I have heard that sound!

ANTOINETTE. Desist, at least for today, I beg of you! It seems like a sin to me!

PAUL. Why like a sin?

ANTOINETTE. You were just remarking about the rest, and now you are doing the same thing, forgetting the dead.

PAUL. I—forget him? I am thinking of him incessantly! And of his last words, before we parted forever! Do you know what they were, Toinette?

ANTOINETTE (*subdued*). Tell me!

PAUL. "Go! Some day you will be sorry!" . . . Possibly he was right, the dear old man! Today it kept resounding from his open grave, as the clods and lumps of snow rumbled down on his coffin. "Are you sorry now? Are you sorry now?" . . . I have tried to get rid of it, but it refuses to go. It keeps pursuing me and cries into my ears!

LASKOWSKI (*has approached the two*). Well, dearie, how are you? What are you doing?

ANTOINETTE (*turns around, as if recoiling from something poisonous*). Oh, it's you!

LASKOWSKI. Who would it be? Ain't it up to me to look after my dearie now and then. Shan't we eat? They are all sitting down.

AUL (*has become composed*). Your husband is quite right, madam. We are the last. Unfortunately Mrs. Warkentin is not very well. May I request you to play the part of the hostess a bit?

NTOINETTE (*distressed*). If it must be, Doctor . . .

AUL (*looks at her*). Yes, there is no help for it, madam. (*Escorts her through the passage to the table.*)

ASKOWSKI (*following them*). And I, old boy. Where am I to go?

AUL (*grimly*). Wherever you please! The world is wide and there is room for all. (*He leads* ANTOINETTE *around the table to her place.*)

ASKOWSKI. I guess the shortest way is the best! I'm going to sit right here. (*He sits down beside* MRS. VON TIEDEMANN, *all the rest have also gradually taken their places. The order at the visible central portion of the table is as follows, from left to right: Outside,* KUNZE, LASKOWSKI, MRS. VON TIEDEMANN, DIRECTOR MERTENS, MRS. SCHNAASE; *opposite these inside,* MRS. BOROWSKI, PAUL, ANTOINETTE, MR. VON TIEDEMANN, DR. BODENSTEIN. *During the whole of the following scene they are eating and drinking.* LENE *and* FRITZ, *in livery, move to and fro, serving.* AUNT CLARA *comes in and goes out as the occasion demands. She has her seat with those who are hidden and whose voices are only heard at times. At first the conversation remains subdued.*)

UNZE (*rises*). Ladies and gentlemen! Before sitting down at the board, to regale ourselves with food and drink, does it not involve upon us to devote a few words to the memory of the beloved deceased, whose mortal remains we have today conducted to the last resting place. And how can we do that more fittingly, ladies and gentlemen, than by recalling the words recorded in holy writ. Ladies and gentlemen, what are the words of the psalmist? The days of our years are three-score years and ten; and if, by reason of

strength, they be four-score years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off and we fly away! Ladies and gentlemen! He who no longer dwells in our midst in the body, but whose spirit is looking down upon all of us, the beloved deceased, may he rest in peace.

[*Silence. Short pause as they continue to eat.*]

LASKOWSKI (*the first to finish his soup, leans back*). A soup like that does warm a fellow up.

VON TIEDEMANN. Especially when you have been out in your sleigh for nearly two hours.

LASKOWSKI. And then a full hour at the cemetery on top of it.

MRS. VON TIEDEMANN (*quickly*). But the sermon was really touching. From the very heart. Any one who had known the dead man . . .

LASKOWSKI. Not a soul kept from crying!

VON TIEDEMANN. Yes, remarkably beautiful!

LASKOWSKI. A fellow forgot all about being hungry.

MRS. BOROWSKI (*leans over to* PAUL). Are they talking about the sermon?

PAUL (*aloud*). Yes, Mrs. Borowski.

MRS. BOROWSKI. I didn't understand very much.

PAUL (*courteously*). At your age, Mrs. Borowski!

MERTENS (*in an undertone to* MRS. VON TIEDEMANN). Who is she?

MRS. VON TIEDEMANN. It's the widow of the former teacher at the estate here.

MERTENS. She seems to hail from the days of the French occupation!

VON TIEDEMANN. *Does* she? She has at least eighty years on her back.

MERTENS. But is well preserved.

MRS. BOROWSKI (*to* PAUL). I say, Mr. Warkentin, I knew your father when he was no bigger than . . . (*Holding her hand not far from the ground.*)

PAUL (*subdued*). Fifty years ago?

MRS. BOROWSKI. Oh, it's longer than that. Almost sixty. I saw them all grow up. Now I'm almost the only one left from those times.

LASKOWSKI (*leans over toward her with his glass*). Well, here's to you Auntie! . . . You don't drink very much any more I suppose? (*He drinks.*)

MRS. BOROWSKI. Oh, indeed! I am still able to take a glass.

PAUL. Come, Mrs. Borowski, let me help you. (*He fills her glass.*)

MRS. BOROWSKI. When I was young I never caught sight of wine. Now that I'm old I have more than I can drink.

LASKOWSKI. Drink ahead, Auntie! Drink ahead! Wine makes you young!

MRS. BOROWSKI. You know, your good wife is always sending me some.

LASKOWSKI (*nonplussed*). I do say, dearie, why, I don't know a thing about that.

[ANTOINETTE *silently shrugs her shoulders and casts a quick glance at him.*]

LASKOWSKI (*friendly again*). Makes no difference, dearie, no difference at all! Just send ahead! We *do* have a lot of it.

ANTOINETTE. There is surely enough for us to spare a little for an old lady.

LASKOWSKI. Sure, dearie!

MRS. BOROWSKI (*leans over to* ANTOINETTE). Do you remember, pet, how you used to come and call with your parents, now dead and gone? A little bit of a thing you were, Paul would lift you on the horse and you didn't cry at all, you sat there just like a grown-up . . . I remember it very well.

ANTOINETTE. I don't. Such things *are* forgotten.

PAUL (*looks at her*). Have you really forgotten that, madam?

ANTOINETTE. Heavens, I haven't thought of it again.

MRS. BOROWSKI. Just wait and see, pet, when you are old you will think of it again.

ANTOINETTE. Not all people grow to be as old as you, dear Mrs. Borowski.

LASKOWSKI (*has partaken freely of the wine*). Dearie, you'll grow as old as the hills! I can prophesy that much. Haven't you the finest kind of a time?

ANTOINETTE. I? . . . Of course!

LASKOWSKI (*garrulously*). What do you lack! . . . Nuthin'! . . . Children's what you lack!

ANTOINETTE (*looks at him sharply*). Never mind, please!

LASKOWSKI (*abashed*). Well, well, don't put on so, dearie!

MRS. VON TIEDEMANN (*to* PAUL). Have you any children, Doctor?

PAUL. No, I'm sorry to say, madam.

MR. VON TIEDEMANN (*to his wife*). We're better off in that respect, Bess, aren't we? Three lusty bairns!

MRS. SCHNAASE. And *we,* with our five!

LASKOWSKI (*touched*). Do you see, dearie! What am I always tellin' you! An agriculturalist without children . . .

KUNZE. Abraham scored one hundred when the Lord bestowed his son Isaac upon him.

LASKOWSKI. But a fellow like me can't wait that long—stuff and nonsense. What if I die and . . .

PAUL. You will take care not to do that.

LASKOWSKI. Don't say that, brother! I'm going to die young! I'm sure of it. An old woman once told my fortune, and she said I wouldn't see more than fifty. But, do you know what, dearie?

MRS. VON TIEDEMANN (*to* ANTOINETTE). I suppose you frequently came to Ellernhof in the old days, Madam von Laskowski?

ANTOINETTE. Why, the departed was my guardian, you know, Mrs. von Tiedemann.

MRS. VON TIEDEMANN. Oh yes. I had forgotten that.

VON TIEDEMANN. Do you ride horseback as much as ever, madam?

ANTOINETTE. Now and then, for pastime!

LASKOWSKI. Now don't you say a word, dearie! Why, you're pasted on a horse all day long, and then from horseback right into the cold, cold water. Did anybody ever hear the like of it?

PAUL (*to* ANTOINETTE). Yesterday *I* had a horseback ride again too, madam. Have I told you about it? The first time in years. And, what is more, I got quite near your place. I was even able to see the houses of Klonowken.

ANTOINETTE. Did you ride through the forest?

PAUL. Of course, through the pine forest of Klonowken, yesterday morning. Right through the snow.

ANTOINETTE. Why, I was out at the same time.

PAUL (*looks at her*). You were, madam? Too bad! Why did we not chance to meet?

ANTOINETTE. I suppose it was not ordained so.

LASKOWSKI (*after drinking again*). I say, dearie, one of these days when I die, do you know what I'll do?

MERTENS. If one of us dies, I'll go to Karlsbad, eh, Laskowski?

LASKOWSKI. Listen, dearie! You'll inherit all I have an' marry another fellow!

PAUL (*sternly*). Control yourself a bit, Laskowski.

LASKOWSKI (*undaunted*). Ain't that true, dearie? Tell me that you'll come to my grave! Promise me that much, dearie! Then I'll die easy. You'll come along and sit down and cry a few tearies on my grave. (*He chokes down his tears and drinks again.*)

VON TIEDEMANN (*has also been drinking freely*). Well, here's to our friend, departed in his prime. (*He raises his glass to* LASKOWSKI.)

MRS. VON TIEDEMANN (*disapprovingly*). Why, Fritz!

VON TIEDEMANN (*collecting himself*). H'm! Well . . . Didn't think of *that*. One forgets. Pardon me!

ANTOINETTE. Will you not help yourselves, ladies and gentlemen? (*To* LENE, *who is just passing with dishes in her hands.*) Serve around once more!

VON TIEDEMANN (*helps himself*). My favorite dish, veal-roast! . . . (*To* BODENSTEIN.) What do you say, Doctor, you *are* so quiet?

DR. BODENSTEIN. Do whatever you do, with a *will!* I am now devoting myself to culinary delights!

MERTENS. I regard this sauce a phenomenal achievement.

MRS. SCHNAASE. There are tomatoes in it, I think.

MERTENS. I must ask for the recipe.

RAABE, JUNIOR'S (*voice in the background*). Here's to you!

VOICES (*in confusion, in the background*). Here's to you! Your health!

LASKOWSKI (*gets up, raises his glass toward the background*). Here's to everybody!

VOICES (*from behind*). Here's to you, Laskowski!

SCHROCK'S (*voice*). Here's to you, old rough-neck!

PAUL. Don't drink so much, Laskowski! (ANTOINETTE *bites her lips and looks away.*)

LASKOWSKI (*whispering*). Let me drink, brother! Drink and forget your pain, says Schiller. Ain't that it, old chap, ain't it, now? You're a kind of a poet yourself, ain't you?

VON TIEDEMANN (*in an undertone, to* MERTENS). He's tanking up again!

ANTOINETTE (*to* PAUL, *through her teeth*). Awful!

PAUL (*in an undertone*). Oh, don't mind him.

LASKOWSKI. Let me drink, old fellow. I'm not going to live long anyhow. It's on my chest . . . Do you hear it rattle, old boy? Listen! Just listen! Listen to *me*, not to my dearie. When we're dead, we're out of it! We'll not get another drop! An' then we'll sleep till judgment day in the pitch-dark grave. Then you'll be rid of me, dearie!

ANTOINETTE (*gets up*). Excuse me, Doctor!

PAUL (*also jumps up*). Are you ill, madam?

MRS. VON TIEDEMANN (*moves aside*). Now it *is* getting a bit uncanny.

MRS. BOROWSKI (*her hand at her ear*). Are they talking about the judgment day?

KUNZE (*who eats away lustily, partly to himself*). On the judgment day when the Lord will return to judge the quick and the dead.

PAUL (*to* ANTOINETTE, *who partly leans upon him*). How are you, Antoinette?

ANTOINETTE (*has become composed again*). I am all right again.)

MRS. SCHNAASE. Would you like a glass of water?

MRS. VON TIEDEMANN. Yes, water!

ANTOINETTE. No, thank you! This awful heat! . . . Don't let me disturb you.

[*The conversation which had become very loud is carried on in a more subdued manner. All are whispering to each other.*]

PAUL. Shall I take you out, madam?

ANTOINETTE (*with a supreme effort*). No, thank you, I shall remain! (*Sits down again.*)

LASKOWSKI (*with a stupid stare*). Just stay here, dearie! Just stay here!

PAUL. Now do be quiet, Laskowski. (*Also sits down again.*)

LASKOWSKI. Ain't I quiet, brother? Quiet! . . . Quiet! . . . Quiet! . . . Quiet as the grave! Damn it all. I wonder how your father feels now.

KUNZE. We are happy, but he is happier.

ANTOINETTE (*frantically controlling herself*). Help yourselves, ladies and gentlemen! Mr. von Tiedemann, don't be backward!

VON TIEDEMANN. I'm getting my share.

MERTENS. So am I. I don't let things affect my appetite.

LASKOWSKI (*singing half audibly*). Jinks, do you have to die, young as you are . . . young as . . .

MRS. BOROWSKI (*to* PAUL). Now it has come, just as the departed always wished.

PAUL. How so, Mrs. Borowski?

MRS. BOROWSKI. That you would be back, Paul, and that everything about the estate would go right on as before! If he could only look down upon that.

PAUL (*nervously*). Yes!

VON TIEDEMANN (*leans over to* PAUL). Settled fact is it, Mr. Warkentin? Really going to get into the harness?

LASKOWSKI (*pricking up his ears*). Can't do it, old chap! Come on! . . . Can't begin to do it!

PAUL. I do intend to, Mr. von Tiedemann.

VON TIEDEMANN. Well, you'd better think that over! Not every one can match your father as an agriculturalist.

PAUL. With a little honest effort . . .

VON TIEDEMANN. If *that* were all! To begin with, you can't match your father physically. You have to be accustomed to such things. In all kinds of weather! And then . . . No child's play to farm now-a-days! Starvation prices for grain! Simply a shame! If that continues I'll vouch that all this blooming farming will go to the devil within twenty years!

MRS. VON TIEDEMANN (*shaking her head*). To think of having you speak that way, Fritz!

VON TIEDEMANN. Of course, if a fellow has a few pennies to fall back on, it's not so bad. But how many are there who have. The rest will go broke!

LASKOWSKI (*hums again*). The Count of Luxemburg has squandered all his cash . . . cash . . . cash . . .

VON TIEDEMANN (*eagerly*). And who will have the advantage? The few who have money. They will buy for a song and some day, when times are better again, they will sell for twice as much. Some day they are likely to roll in wealth!

LASKOWSKI (*as before*). Has squandered all his cash . . . In one old merry night . . . ha, ha!

ANTOINETTE (*leans back in her chair*). My husband is no longer conscious of what he is saying!

LASKOWSKI. Me? Not conscious? . . . *Don't* I know. Word for word! Shall I tell you, dearie? What you said and what I said and what Paul said to you . . . Antoinette, how are you? . . . How are you Antoinette? (*Short laugh.*) Well, do I know, dearie? Did I hold on to it?

PAUL. One must excuse you in your condition.

VON TIEDEMANN. Don't worry about *him,* madam. He's one of these fellows with a big purse. He may chuckle! I can foresee that he will buy up the whole county some day!

LASKOWSKI. Just what I'll do. What's the price of the world? Five bits a fling! . . . We can still raise that much. The more foolish the farmer, the bigger his spuds!

MERTENS. His sugar-beets!

LASKOWSKI. I say, boys! . . . Do you know how many tons of sugar-beets I raised to the acre? Last round?

VON TIEDEMANN. Now, don't spread it on!

LASKOWSKI (*jumps up*). Fellows! My word of honor! I'm not lying! Thirty-five tons an acre! Who can match that? Nobody can! I can! I'm a devil of a fellow, I've always said so, ain't I, dearie? You know! (*He strikes his chest and sits down.*)

VON TIEDEMANN. Thirty-five ton per acre! Ridiculous!

MERTENS. I can honestly swear to the contrary!

LASKOWSKI. And your dad, I tell you he was mad! He just couldn't look at me! But I don't bear him any grudge! I'm a man of honor! Shake hands, old chap! *You* say so, ain't I a man of honor? Put 'er there! Man of honor face to face with man of honor. But you must look at me, man alive! Or I won't believe you! (*He extends his hand over to* PAUL.)

PAUL (*negative gesture*). Never mind! Just believe me.

LASKOWSKI (*looks at* ANTOINETTE). Dearie, don't make such a face! Eat! Eat! . . . So you can get strong, so you can survive your poor Heliodor! (*All except* PAUL *and* ANTOINETTE *laugh.*)

DR. BODENSTEIN (*to* MERTENS). Incipient delirium!

[MRS. VON TIEDEMANN *whispers something into* MERTENS' *ear.*]

PAUL (*to* ANTOINETTE). You really haven't taken a thing, madam!

ANTOINETTE. I am not hungry. But will the ladies and gentlemen not take something more? A little more of the dessert, perhaps.

VON TIEDEMANN. No, thanks, madam! I can't eat another thing! Not if I try! Or I'll burst!

MRS. VON TIEDEMANN (*reproachfully*). Fritz!

DR. BODENSTEIN. Albumen! Fat! Carbo-hydrates! *In hoc signo vinces.*

MERTENS. And now a little cup of coffee!

VON TIEDEMANN. And a cock-tail!

DR. BODENSTEIN. To retard metabolism!

PAUL. The coffee will be here directly!

[AUNT CLARA *appears upon the scene and talks to* ANTOINETTE *in an undertone.*]

LASKOWSKI (*who has been dozing, wakes up again, takes his glass and addresses* PAUL). You know what I'de done, Paul, if I'd been your dad?

ANTOINETTE (*nodding to* AUNT CLARA). Miss Clara tells me that the coffee is in the next room. Whenever the ladies and gentlemen are so disposed . . .

LASKOWSKI (*interrupts*). If I'de been your father, old chap, I'd drunk all of my claret before my wind-up! I wouldn't 'a left a drop!

SCHROCK'S (*voice*). Greedy gut!

[*All get up and are about to exchange formalities.*]

RAABE JUNIOR'S (*voice in the background*). Here's to you!

DR. BODENSTEIN (*knocks on his glass, with a loud voice*). Ladies and gentlemen! Let us dedicate a glass to the memory of the departed, according to the beautiful tradition of our fathers; that we must not mourn the dead, that we should envy them! Our slumbering friend lives on in the memory of those who were near to him! To immortality, in this sense, all of us may, after all, agree in a manner! (*He raises his glass and clinks with those beside him. All the rest do the same. Silence prevails. Only the clinking of glasses is heard.*)

PAUL (*raising his glass, to* ANTOINETTE). The doctor is right! Let us drink to his memory, madam! May the earth rest lightly on him! (ANTOINETTE *lowers her head and stifles her tears.*)

PAUL (*looking at her fervently*). Aren't you going to respond?

ANTOINETTE (*musters her strength, raises her head, and with tears in her eyes clinks glasses with him*).

PAUL (*drinks*). To the memory of my father.

ANTOINETTE (*nods*). Your father!

PAUL. To that of our parents, madam! A silent glass! (*He empties his glass.*)

[ANTOINETTE *puts down her glass, after she has drunk.*]

LASKOWSKI (*has noticed* ANTOINETTE). Just cry ahead, dearie! Cry your fill! That's the way they'll drink to your Heliodor some day!

DR. BODENSTEIN. And so they will drink to all of us some day!

KUNZE. For man's life on earth is like unto the grass of the field, on which the wind bloweth. It flourisheth for a season and withereth and no one remembereth it. So also the children of men.

DR. BODENSTEIN. This goblet to the departed, one and all! (*He drinks again.*)

PAUL. The departed on these walls! I drink to you! (*He raises his glass to the portraits on the walls. All have risen meanwhile, and broken up into new groups. Confusion of voices in the background.*)

SCHROCK and RAABE (*have intonated the Gaudeamus. At first softly, then more distinctly the following stanza is sung*):

Ubi sunt qui ante nos
In mundo fuere?
Vadite ad superos,
Transite ad inferos,
Ubi jam fuere.

GLYSZINSKI (*has joined in lustily at the end, and repeats alone*). Ubi jam fuere!

[MERTENS, VON TIEDEMANN, MRS. SCHNAASE, MRS. VON TIEDEMANN *stand in the foreground where they have been conversing in an undertone.*]

MERTENS (*in an undertone*). Now the pot is boiling!

VON TIEDEMANN (*a bit mellow*). That's the way a funeral should be! No airs! The dead won't become alive again anyhow!

MERTENS. Many a man might object to that anyhow!

VON TIEDEMANN. The devil take it. A fellow doesn't want to give up what he once has!

MERTENS. Wasn't Laskowski superb again?

VON TIEDEMANN. Always is, of late! Never see him any other way!

MRS. VON TIEDEMANN. And then Mrs. Laskowski? Did you watch, Gretchen?

MRS. SCHNAASE. I don't exactly see, Elizabeth!

MRS. VON TIEDEMANN. You *didn't*, how they kept on whispering together? She hasn't a bit of modesty!

VON TIEDEMANN. I'll bet my head Laskowski will plant himself here some day. The young man surely can't make it go in the long run. Why *he* can't hold on to the estate.

MRS. VON TIEDEMANN. Didn't she bat her eyes again!

MERTENS. She *does* have eyes!

VON TIEDEMANN. *Does* she!

MRS. VON TIEDEMANN. Just go ahead and propose to her, the togged-out thing! . . . Come on Gretchen!

[*Both go off to the left.*]

VON TIEDEMANN. Bang!

MERTENS. What do you think of *that?*

VON TIEDEMANN. Let's see if we can find a cocktail! Come on Mertens! (*They go out at the left.*)

[PAUL, ANTOINETTE, GLYSZINSKI *come over from the right.*]

FORDING THE WATER

HEINRICH VON ZÜGEL

GLYSZINSKI (*quite intoxicated, to* ANTOINETTE). Without a doubt, madam, a beautiful, sensitive soul will, above all, find expression in the hand. So would you, perhaps, let me have your hand for a moment. . . .

ANTOINETTE (*chilly*). For what purpose?

GLYSZINSKI (*has seized her hand, impassioned*). Only to imprint a kiss upon these beautiful, soft, delicate, distinguished, aristocratic finger-tips! (*He kisses her finger-tips.*)

ANTOINETTE (*withdraws her hand*). I beg your pardon, sir!

LASKOWSKI (*is detained in a group consisting of* SCHROCK, RAABE, JR., *and others. He has seen* GLYSZINSKI *kiss* ANTOINETTE'S *hand*). Boys, let me go!

SCHROCK, RAABE, AND OTHERS. Stay right here, old boy.

LASKOWSKI. Let me go, I say . . . I want to get to my dearie! (*He tries to disengage himself.*)

SCHROCK (*very unsteady on his feet*). Dear old chap! I'll . . . not . . . let you! . . . Let's have another drink first!

LASKOWSKI. I want to get to my dearie! (*They restrain him.*)

GLYSZINSKI (*follows* ANTOINETTE *with his eyes. She has retreated behind the oleanders in the foreground on the left*). Ravishing creature! I must follow her! (*About to follow her.*)

PAUL. That you will *not* do! (*Intercepts him.*)

GLYSZINSKI. Let me pass!

PAUL. That way, please! (*He points to the left.*)

GLYSZINSKI (*with clenched fists*). Brutal fellow! (*He struts toward the left and runs into* LASKOWSKI, *who is still standing in the group with* SCHROCK *and the rest, and who immediately fraternizes with him.*)

PAUL (*looking at him as he goes*). A rare team!

LASKOWSKI (*approaches* GLYSZINSKI, *trying to embrace him*). Old chap! . . . Are you a Pole?

GLYSZINSKI. A Pole! Yes, indeed! von Glyszinski!

LASKOWSKI. Your name is Glyszinski! Mine is Laskowski! Come to my heart, fellow countryman!

RAABE. Boys, such a thing as that calls for a drink. (*He goes over toward the left.*)

LASKOWSKI. Drink, fellow countryman! Drink and kiss my wife. Do you want to kiss my wife?

GLYSZINSKI (*pompously*). Sir!

LASKOWSKI. *You* may. Nobody else. A Pole may. Ain't she beautiful, that dearie of mine?

GLYSZINSKI. Beautiful as the starry sky!

LASKOWSKI (*embracing his neck*). Brother! Come along!

SCHROCK (*stands near them, swaying*). Your health, you . . . jolly . . . brothers!

LASKOWSKI. Brotherhood? Yes, we'll drink to our brotherhood, my fellow countryman.

RAABE (*comes in from the left*). There's lots of good stuff in there. Come, be quick about it. Too bad to waste your time here!

LASKOWSKI (*leading* GLYSZINSKI, *who resists a trifle, out at the left, singing as he goes*). Poland is not lost forever!

[RAABE *and* SCHROCK *follow arm in arm. The rest have gradually withdrawn toward the left in the course of the preceding scene.* LENE *and* FRITZ *clear the table and carry out the dishes.* AUNT CLARA *directs the work and assists now and then.* PAUL *stands near the table in the foreground, lost in thought.*]

AUNT CLARA. Won't you go and have some coffee, Paul?

PAUL. No, not now, Auntie! Later! I need a little rest! Will you soon be through?

AUNT CLARA. Directly, my boy! . . . (*To* LENE.) Hurry now! There is plenty of work ahead!

PAUL (*subdued*). Leave me alone for a little while, Auntie!

AUNT CLARA (*understanding him*). I'll be going, Paul!

[LENE *and* FRITZ *have completed their work and go out at the right.*]

AUNT CLARA (*in an undertone, as she goes toward the right*). Have a good chat, Paul!

PAUL (*seriously*). No occasion!

[AUNT CLARA *goes off at the left. One can hear her, as she closes the door on the left. Silence.*]

PAUL (*stands undecided for a moment, then he slowly walks over to the row of oleanders, where* ANTOINETTE *sits leaning back in a chair at the sofa table with her hands pressed to her face. He looks at her for a long while, then softly says*). Antoinette!

ANTOINETTE (*moans to herself, without stirring*). My God! . . . My God!

PAUL (*places his hand on the crown of her head*). You poor . . . poor child! (*He sits down in the chair beside her, takes her hand which she surrenders to him passively, presses it and tenderly kisses it, saying*). Sweet . . . sweet Toinette!

[ANTOINETTE *covers her face with her left hand while* PAUL *continues to hold her right hand. She is breathing convulsively.*]

PAUL (*looks at her with devotion, closes his hands nervously*). I fairly worship you! (*Continues to look at her, then says.*) Won't you look at me, Antoinette? (*He gently removes her hand from her face.*) Please, please, Toinette! *Let* me see your eyes! Just let me see your eyes! (*He stoops down over her.*)

ANTOINETTE (*sinks upon his breast, putting her arms around his neck*). Dearest! . . . Dearest Paul!

PAUL (*embraces her impetuously*). Sweetheart! . . . Now you are mine! . . . Sweetheart! (*Continuing in a silent, fervent embrace. Pause.*)

ANTOINETTE (*startled, and tries to withdraw from him*). God! Great God! . . . What have I done?

PAUL (*holds her and embraces her again*). No retreat, Antoinette. No retreat is *possible!*

ANTOINETTE (*beside herself*). Let me go, Paul!

PAUL. I shall not let you go, Toinette. And if it is a matter of life and death.

ANTOINETTE (*with a slight outcry*). Paul!

PAUL (*presses her to him firmer than ever*). Do you want the people to come in? Then call them! Let them find us!

ANTOINETTE (*on his breast*). I had an intimation of this.

PAUL. Did you? You too?

ANTOINETTE. Both of us, Paul! (*In rapture.*) Kiss me, my friend! . . . My beloved!

PAUL. A thousand times over! (*He kisses her.*)

ANTOINETTE (*returns his kisses*). And *I, you* a thousand times over!

PAUL. My dear, tell me that you love me!

ANTOINETTE (*nestling up to him*). You know I do, dear! . . . Why have me tell you?

PAUL (*with folded hands*). Please, please tell me!

ANTOINETTE. I do love you, Paul!

PAUL. Tell me again! I have never heard the word! Say it once more!

ANTOINETTE. I have always loved you, Paul!

PAUL. Always? Always? Always?

ANTOINETTE. Always!

PAUL. And I failed to realize it all! . . . Fool, fool, fool! (*He moans convulsively.*)

ANTOINETTE (*places her arms about him again*). Don't think of it! Not now!

PAUL. You are right, dear! Our time is short!

ANTOINETTE. Forget all! Forget! Forget!

PAUL. I *cannot* forget! It was too long!

ANTOINETTE. Indeed it was long! But I knew that you would return.

PAUL. And you took the other man?

ANTOINETTE (*sadly, but with a touch of roguishness*). And *you* the other woman!

PAUL (*startled*). Do not remind me of it!

ANTOINETTE (*endearingly*). I took the other man while I was thinking of you! I waited for you!

PAUL. Waited for me, and I was not conscious of it. Missed my happiness. Staked my life for nothing!

For a delusion! Some one had to die before I could realize what I might have enjoyed! Too late, too late, too late!

ANTOINETTE (*endearingly*). Forget, my love! Forget! Forget! Lay your head upon my breast!

PAUL (*places his head upon her bosom*). A good resting place.

ANTOINETTE (*rocks him in her arms*). Sleep, beloved! Sleep!

PAUL (*straightens up, beside himself with longing*). Antoinette! . . .

ANTOINETTE. Mine again, lover of my youth!

PAUL. Dearest! . . . Dearest!

ANTOINETTE. Cruel, cruel man! . . . Mine after tireless seeking.

PAUL. Idol of my heart! . . . Safe in my arms at last! (*Pause. Rapturous embrace.*)

PAUL (*straightens up and looks into her eyes*). Is this still sinful, sweetheart?

ANTOINETTE (*nods gravely*). Still! And will remain so.

PAUL (*roguishly*). Not to be forgiven?

ANTOINETTE (*gravely*). Not to be forgiven!

PAUL. And yet you consent, with all your piety?

ANTOINETTE. I do consent! I have no other choice! (*She leans upon his breast.*)

PAUL (*embraces her, then with a sad smile*). *Never* to be forgiven, Antoinette?

ANTOINETTE (*gently*). Possibly! In heaven.

PAUL. Your God is inexorable, Antoinette.

ANTOINETTE (*impassioned*). You are my god! I have ceased to have another!

PAUL. And would you follow me, even unto death?

ANTOINETTE. Unto death and beyond!

PAUL (*is forced to smile*). Even to damnation, I dare say?

ANTOINETTE. These terrors have lost their force for both of us!

PAUL. Do you think so? Have you already come to this?

ANTOINETTE. We have had our damnation here on earth!

PAUL (*jumps up*). Here on earth! But not one hour more! Now the end is at hand!

ANTOINETTE. Come, dear, sit down with me.

PAUL. Yes, let us ponder what we are to do now. (*He sits down beside her again.*)

ANTOINETTE (*nestles up to him*). Not now! Not today! Promise me!

PAUL. When, when, Toinette? It *must* come to an end.

ANTOINETTE. It shall! But let *me* determine the hour, dearest!

PAUL. You?

ANTOINETTE. Yes, the day and the hour, do you hear?

PAUL. Antoinette, if you put the matter in this way . . . I cannot refuse, whatever you may ask!

ANTOINETTE. Only one more day! Then I will write or come and tell you. Will you be ready?

PAUL. Then I shall be ready for anything! Then we shall have a reckoning. Then life shall begin all over again.

ANTOINETTE. Yes, another life!

PAUL (*sadly*). Even though the sun is already sinking. . . . Possibly there is still time.

ANTOINETTE. I shall do anything for you and you will do anything for me. . . . We agree to that! (*They look into each other's eyes.*)

PAUL (*gently*). Do you remember, Toinette, on this very spot . . .?

ANTOINETTE. Ten years ago? I do! I do!

PAUL. How strangely all has come about and how necessary nevertheless! So predestined! So inexorable! Fate! Fate!

ANTOINETTE (*brooding*). I hung upon your lips and you ignored me! I had ceased to exist for you!

PAUL. And so we lost each other.

ANTOINETTE. But today, today we have found each other once more, oh lover of my youth!

PAUL. Late, Toinette, so late!

ANTOINETTE. Heavens, how stupid I was in those days!

PAUL. Stupid because you loved me, Toinette?

ANTOINETTE. No, because I did not tell you.

PAUL. And I did not suspect it! Now who was worse?

ANTOINETTE. Both of us, dear! We were too young!

PAUL. And today I am an old man!

ANTOINETTE. And what of *me* . . . An old woman!

PAUL. Beloved! . . . Young and beautiful as ever. How young you have remained all of these years!

ANTOINETTE. For your sake, dear. I knew that I must remain young till you would return! That is why I insisted upon riding like a Cossack . . .

PAUL. That is why?

ANTOINETTE. And swimming like a trout in the stream! And rowing like a sailor!

PAUL. And all in order to remain young and beautiful? . . . You vain, vain creature!

ANTOINETTE (*mysteriously*). And in order to forget, you foolish, foolish fellow!

PAUL (*to himself, bitterly*). In order to forget!

ANTOINETTE (*taking his head in her hands*). Don't think of it! Don't think of it! Now we have found each other again. That too is past!

PAUL. Yes, all is past! I have you and shall never leave you! . . . (*Looking up at the walls*). Yes, look down upon me out of your frames! Father and mother, envy me! Venerable hall, rarely have you beheld such happiness! . . .

ANTOINETTE. Happiness and death in one, lover!

PAUL. Possibly they are one and the same! (*The door at the left is opened, both get up.*)

AUNT CLARA'S (*voice from the left*). Paul, are you here?

PAUL. We are here, Aunt Clara! (*Noise from the left.*)

AUNT CLARA (*comes forward*). Our guests are about to go, Paul.

ANTOINETTE. Very well! Then we'll go too. (*The two walk erectly into the center passage.*)

HELLA (*has opened the door at the right, enters and sees* PAUL *and* ANTOINETTE *with* AUNT CLARA). Paul!

PAUL (*turning around very calmly*). Is it you, Hella?

HELLA. As you see! (*She stands immediately before them, looks at them with a hostile expression; to* ANTOINETTE.) I beg your pardon, madam!

ANTOINETTE (*nods her head*). Please!

PAUL (*coldly*). What do you wish?

HELLA (*looks at him nonplussed, is silent a moment and then says curtly*). Where is Glyszinski? I need him!

PAUL (*as before*). There, if you please. If you will take the trouble to step into the next room . . . (LASKOWSKI *and* GLYSZINSKI, *arm in arm, enter from the left, followed by the other guests.*)

LASKOWSKI (*very tipsy, but not completely robbed of his senses*). Brother! Polish brother! Don't leave me in the lurch . . . Help me find my dearie!

ANTOINETTE (*with head erect*). Here I am.

LASKOWSKI (*sobered at the sight of her*). Why dearie, where have you been? Have you had a long talk with Paul?

ANTOINETTE (*extends her hand to* PAUL). Good-by, Doctor!

PAUL. Good-by, madam! We shall see each other again! (*He looks squarely into her eye.*)

ANTOINETTE (*significantly*). We *shall* see each other again.

LASKOWSKI. Shan't we go, dearie? Why, it's almost evening.

ANTOINETTE. Yes, almost evening. I am ready. (*She walks over to the right calmly and goes out. The guests prepare to go.*)

HELLA (*has been standing silently witnessing the scene, and now approaches* PAUL). What does this mean, Paul?

PAUL (*about to go, frigidly*). A woman whom I knew in the old days! . . . Good-by. (*He leaves her and goes out at the right with the guests.*)

HELLA (*partly to herself, partly calling after him*). Paul! What *does* this mean? . . . Paul!

ACT IV

Afternoon, two days later. The banquet board and oleanders have been removed, every trace of the funeral has been carefully obliterated. Clear sunlight comes in from the garden windows in the background and lights up the spacious, sombre hall. The bushes and trees of the garden are coated with ice. The fire is burning as usual. Toward the end of the act the sunlight gradually vanishes and a light, gray dusk fills the hall. AUNT CLARA *stands at the fireplace with her arms folded over her waist, and looks into the fire.*

PAUL (*who has been pacing the floor, stops and passes his hand over his hair nervously*). So no letter has come, Aunt Clara?

AUNT CLARA (*looking up*). No, no, my boy.

PAUL (*impatiently*). And no messenger either?

AUNT CLARA. From where do you expect one?

PAUL (*in agony*). Great God, from where? From where? From anywhere? Some tiding! Some word! A letter! (*Paces the floor again excitedly.*)

AUNT CLARA. Why I can't tell. Are you expecting anything from some source or other?

PAUL (*impetuously*). Would I be *asking*, Aunt Clara?

[*Silence.*]

PAUL (*violently agitated, partly to himself*). Incomprehensible! Incomprehensible! Two days without news! Two full days!

AUNT CLARA (*sadly*). I do not comprehend you either, my boy!

PAUL (*takes a few steps without heeding her*). This stillness! This death-like stillness!

AUNT CLARA (*sits down*). Isn't it good, when peace prevails?

PAUL. As you look at it. Certainly it is good! But first of all one must be at peace himself! Must have become calm and clear about the matters that concern one. Know what one wants to do and is expected to do and what one is here for in this world.

AUNT CLARA. But every one knows that, Paul.

PAUL (*without listening to her, rather to himself*). Uncanny, this silence all around one. Doubly and threefold one feels, how it seethes and boils within, without one's getting anywhere. One can hear himself *think!* (*He stops, then in a changed voice, as he looks up.*) No no, Aunt Clara, people who have closed their account, belong in the country. Others do not! (AUNT CLARA *looks at him and is silent. After a moment.*) The rest need noise, diversion, human beings about them. One *must* have something in order to *be able to* forget! Some narcotic to put one to sleep! There *are* people, who do that all of their lives and are quite happy, who never come to themselves, are continually living in a kind of intoxication and leave this world without attaining real consciousness. You see, Auntie, the city is the proper place for that. There you can dull your feelings and forget.

AUNT CLARA. I could not stand the city.

PAUL. Yes, you, Aunt Clara! You are a child of the country.

AUNT CLARA. Well, aren't you, Paul?

PAUL. True! But you have never been alienated from the soil! I tell you the man who has once partaken of that poison, can not give it up, he is forced to go back to it again and again.

AUNT CLARA (*impatiently*). One simply can't understand you, Paul. When you arrived, you said one thing and now you are saying another. The very idea!

PAUL (*is forced to smile*). You fail to understand that, you good old soul! Of course, you do not know what has come to pass since then. At that time I was not at odds with myself . . .

AUNT CLARA. At that time? When, pray tell? You came on the third holiday and this is New Year's eve. You have been here for five days.

PAUL. Today it's quite a different matter. Quite different!

AUNT CLARA. What on earth has *happened,* pray tell!

PAUL. Much, much, Aunt Clara!

AUNT CLARA (*probing*). I suppose because they were a bit boisterous at the funeral? That's the way of it, you know, when they get to drinking.

PAUL (*negative gesture*). Good heavens, no! . . . No!

AUNT CLARA. That's the way they *always* act at funerals. I know of funerals where there was dancing.

PAUL. Yes, yes, that may be!

AUNT CLARA. And then they all were so friendly with you.

PAUL. Oh, yes. With the friendliest kind of an air, they told me not to take it into my head that I know how to farm.

AUNT CLARA. Why, Paul. You only imagine that!

PAUL. The good neighbors. At bottom they are right! How should an old man be able to learn the things that call for the efforts of a whole life, just as any other career does! Ridiculous! Why that simply must have lurid consequences.

AUNT CLARA (*impatiently*). I should never have thought that you would act this way, Paul!

PAUL. Act what way? I am only checking over the possibilities. Every business man does that! And I tell you, the prospects are desperately bad! I can fairly see Laskowski establish himself here after I have lost the place! (*He has slowly walked over to the garden window on the right and looks out into the garden.*)

[*Silence.*]

PAUL (*after a time*). What a beautiful day! The snow is glittering in the sunlight. The trees stand so motionless.

AUNT CLARA. Awfully cold out-doors, my boy!

PAUL. I know it, Aunt Clara, but the light is refreshing after all of the dark days. The old year is shining forth once more in its full glory.

PAUL. Then you may go. Oh yes, when the inspector returns, you might call me. (LENE *goes off to the right.*)

PAUL (*walks through the hall, clenching his fists nervously*). Nothing yet? Nothing yet? And the day is almost gone!

AUNT CLARA (*with growing anxiety*). What's the matter with you, Paul? Something is brewing here!

PAUL. That may be very true!

AUNT CLARA. And then, that you insist upon changing your quarters today! It does seem to me . . . !

PAUL. You can only take pleasure in that. You see by that, that I have resolved to stay at Ellernhof. Or I should certainly not go to the trouble.

AUNT CLARA. Yes, yes, but your wife?

PAUL. Who? Hella? All the better if the matter comes to a head. The issue is dead ripe!

AUNT CLARA (*approaches him anxiously*). Paul, Paul! This will not come to a good end.

PAUL. Quite possible. That is not at all necessary!

AUNT CLARA. And I am to blame for all.

PAUL. You? Why?

AUNT CLARA. I got you into it! No one else!

PAUL (*is forced to smile*). Innocent creature! Individuals quite apart from you got me into it. It has taken a whole lifetime to bring it about! You are as little to blame for that as you are for the fall of Adam and the existence of the world and the fact that some day we shall all have to die!

AUNT CLARA (*with her apron before her face*). I told you about Antoinette! For she is at the bottom of it! I'll stake my head on that!

PAUL. Don't torture me, Aunt Clara!

AUNT CLARA. She is at the bottom of it! And I, in my stupidity, cap the climax by leaving the two of you alone at the funeral day before yesterday.

PAUL. I shall be grateful to you for that all of my life, Aunt Clara!

AUNT CLARA. My notion was for you to have a little talk together, and then to think what it has led to! May God forgive what I have done.

PAUL (*partly to himself*). She promised me to come. And she is not coming! She promised me to write. And she does not write. Not a word. Not the remotest token! How do I know, but everything was a delusion? Childish fancy and nothing more? The intoxication of a moment which seized her and vanished again when she sat in her sleigh and rode away in the winter night? Do I know? (*He puts his hand to his head.*)

AUNT CLARA (*very uneasy*). Paul, what are you talking about? *Tell* me!

PAUL (*jumps up without listening to her*). No! . . . Then farewell Ellernhof! Farewell my home and everything!

AUNT CLARA. Do be quiet! What in the world is the matter?

PAUL (*walks up and down impatiently, stops again, speaks to himself in an undertone*). At that time I deceived her, deceived her without knowing and wishing to. What if she deceives me now? What if she pays me back? (*He sinks down in the chair near the fireplace in violent conflict with himself.*)

AUNT CLARA (*in despair*). What a calamity! What a calamity!

PAUL (*as if shaking something off*). No! No! No! . . . it cannot but come out right. (*Heaves a sigh of relief.*)

AUNT CLARA (*joyful again*). Do you see, my boy?

PAUL (*gloomily*). Don't rejoice prematurely, Auntie! It seems to me that this house fosters misfortune! All that you need to do is to look at those faces! They all have a suggestion of melancholy and gloom. (*He looks up at the portraits pensively.*) Just as if the sun had never shone into their hearts, you know. No

air of hopefulness, no suggestion of light and freedom! So chained to the earth! So savagely taciturn? Can that be due to the air and soil? It will probably assert itself in me too, after I have been here for some time. Possibly it would have been better, Auntie, if I had never returned to this house! I should have continued that life of mine, not cold, not warm, not happy, not unhappy! I should never have found out what I have really missed and yet can never find. Possibly it would have been better. [*Short pause.*]

LENE (*opens the door at the right and stands in the door*). The inspector is here, sir. Shall he come in? He is lunching just now.

PAUL (*gets up*). No, never mind. One moment, Auntie! (*He nods to her and goes out with* LENE.)

[AUNT CLARA *shakes her head apprehensively as she follows him with her eyes, heaves a deep sigh, occupies herself with this and that in the room, then seems to be listening to a noise on the left. She straightens up energetically. Presently the door on the left is opened.*]

HELLA (*enters, dressed in black. She looks solemn and rather pale. She slowly approaches* AUNT CLARA. *The two face each other and eye each other for a moment*). I thought Paul was here.

AUNT CLARA. Paul will surely be back any minute.

HELLA. Will he? Then I shall wait. (*She turns around and starts for the window.*)

AUNT CLARA (*hesitates a moment, then with a sudden effort*). Madam . . . Doctor . . .? (*Takes a step in the direction of* HELLA.)

HELLA (*looks around surprised*). Were you saying something?

AUNT CLARA (*erect*). Keep an eye on Paul, madam! . . . That's all I have to say!

HELLA (*approaches*). How so?

AUNT CLARA. I am simply saying, keep an eye on Paul!

HELLA (*steps up to her, with a searching look*). *What* is going on? . . .

AUNT CLARA. Talk to him yourself. I can't fathom it.

HELLA. Then I will tell you. Do you think I am blind? Do you suppose that I am unable to see through the situation here? I know Paul and I know you, all of you who are turning Paul's head!

AUNT CLARA (*angered*). Mercy me! *I*, turn Paul's head?

HELLA. Yes, you, and all of you around here! I will tell you to your face! You are trying to set Paul against me!

AUNT CLARA (*with increasing excitement*). I never set nobody against no one! Nobody ever said such a thing about me! God knows! You are the first person to do that! And on top of it all, I have the best intentions! I even want to help you! Well, I do say . . . ! (*Takes several steps through the hall.*)

HELLA (*with contemptuous laughter*). You help me? . . . H'm! You wanted to get rid of me, and that is why you started all this about the estate, and staying here, and who knows *what* else. But I declare to you, once and for all! Don't go to any trouble! You will not succeed in parting Paul and me!

AUNT CLARA (*in spite of herself*). May be not I!

HELLA. *Not you?* . . . Oh indeed! . . . Not you!

AUNT CLARA (*continuing in her anger*). No! Not I! Of course not! Even if you have deserved it, ten times over!

HELLA (*also continues her lead*). Not you? . . . Well, well! So it's some other woman! (*She steps up before* AUNT CLARA.) Some other woman is trying to separate us, Paul and me? Is that it? Yes or no?

AUNT CLARA (*frightened*). I haven't said a thing. I know nothing about it.

HELLA (*triumphantly*). I thought so! And now I grasp the whole situation! . . . That accounts for Paul's

behavior, this strange behavior! Well, well! (*She walks to and fro excitedly, speaks partly to herself.*) But you shall not succeed! No, no! (*Addressing* AUNT CLARA *again.*) You shall not succeed! We'll just see who knows Paul better, you or I!

AUNT CLARA (*very seriously*). Madam, I am an old woman, you may believe me or not, I tell you, don't carry matters too far with Paul!

HELLA (*reflecting again*). So it was she? . . . The Polish woman, of course! Didn't I know it?

AUNT CLARA (*almost threatening*). Don't carry matters too far! Remember what I say.

HELLA (*with a sudden change*). Where is Paul?

AUNT CLARA (*anxiously*). What *is* the matter?

HELLA (*very calmly and firmly*). I must speak to Paul.

AUNT CLARA. Merciful God! Now I see it coming!

HELLA. Yes, I am going away and Paul is going with me. That is the end of the whole matter. I suppose that is not just exactly what you had expected.

AUNT CLARA (*petrified*). And you are going to desert Ellernhof!

HELLA. It will be a long time before the estate sees us again. Prepare for that. As for the rest, we shall see later.

AUNT CLARA (*turns away*). Then I might as well order my grave at once, the sooner the better.

HELLA (*with an air of superiority*). Don't worry! You will be cared for.

AUNT CLARA (*straightening up*). Not a soul needs to care for me henceforth, madam! My way is quite clear to me. It will not be very long. Look at the men and women on these walls, they all followed this course. Now I shall emulate their example. What is coming now is no longer suitable for me. (*She slowly steps to the door with head bowed*).

HELLA (*partly to herself*). No, what is coming now is the new world and new men and women! (*She stands and*

reflects for a moment, then resolutely.) New men and women! Yes! Yes, we are ready to fight for that! (*She clasps her hands vigorously, suggesting inflexible resolution.*)

AUL (*enters from the right, comes upon* AUNT CLARA, *who is going out*). What ails you, Auntie? How you do look!

UNT CLARA (*shakes her head*). Don't ask me, my boy. I have lived my life! (*She goes out slowly and closes the door.*)

AUL (*steps to the fireplace pondering deeply and drops down in a chair*). What did she say? . . . Lived my life? . . . A soothing phrase! A cradle-song! No more pain, no more care! All over! . . . Lived my life! (*Supports his head on his hand.*)

[*Short pause.*]

ELLA (*steps up to* PAUL, *lays her hand on his shoulder and says kindly*). Paul!

AUL. And?

ELLA. Be a man, Paul! I beg of you.

AUL (*looks up, with a deep breath*). That is just what I intend to do.

ELLA. For two days you have been walking around without saying a word. That surely cannot continue.

AUL. That *will* not continue, I am sure.

ELLA. Why don't you speak? What have I done to you?

AUL (*bitterly*). You to me? . . . Nothing.

ELLA. See here, Paul, I stayed here on your account, longer than I had intended and than seems justifiable to me.

AUL. Why did you? I did not ask you again.

ELLA. Quite right. I did it of my own accord. Now don't you think that counts for more, Paul? (*She closely draws up a chair and sits down facing* PAUL.)

AUL. Up to the day before yesterday *anything* would have counted with me. Today no longer, Hella!

HELLA (*eagerly*). I remained because I kept in mind that it might be agreeable to you to have me near you. I have given you time to come to yourself again. I know very well what is going on in you.

PAUL. Hardly!

HELLA. Indeed, Paul, indeed! You have seen the soil of your boyhood home again. You have buried your father. I understand your crisis completely.

PAUL. Really! All at once!

HELLA. From the very beginning!

PAUL. I did not realize very much of it!

HELLA (*interrupting him*). Simply because I thought it would be best to let you settle that for yourself. That is why I have not interfered; allowed you to go your own way, these days. (PAUL *shrugs his shoulders and is silent.*) Does all this fail to convince you?

PAUL (*distressed*). Drop that, Hella.

HELLA (*excited*). What does this mean, Paul? We must have an understanding!

PAUL. That is no longer possible for us, Hella!

HELLA. It certainly has been, up to the present. How often we have quarreled in these years, and sailed into each other, and we have always found our way back to each other again for the simple reason that we belong together! Why in the world should that be impossible now?

PAUL (*struggles with himself; jumps up*). Because . . . Because . . . (*Groping for words.*)

HELLA (*has become calm*). Well, because? . . . Possibly because I did not care to stay down here, day before yesterday, did not dine with your guests when you asked me to do so? Is that it?

PAUL. That and many other things.

HELLA (*gets up*). Paul, don't be petty! I really can't bear to hear you talk in this manner. Are you so completely unable to enter into my feelings? I could not share your sorrow. Your father did not give me any occa-

sion for that. I do not wish to speak ill of him, but I cannot forget it. After all, that is only human!

AUL. So the dead man stands between us. Why don't you say so frankly!

ELLA. If you insist, yes. At least, for the moment! I was not able to stay with you. I *had* to be alone.

AUL. Then blame yourself for the consequences! You deserted me at a moment when simply everything was unsettling me . . .

ELLA (*interrupts him*). Oh, you suppose I don't know what you mean?

AUL (*excited*). Well?

ELLA. Shall I tell you?

AUL (*controlling himself with difficulty*). Please!

ELLA (*triumphantly*). Dear Paul! Just recall the lady with the ashy-blonde hair, for a moment!

AUL (*embarrassed*). What lady?

ELLA. Why, Paul? The one with whom I saw you after the banquet, day before yesterday. Your aunt was there too, wasn't she?

AUL (*affecting surprise*). You seem to refer to Madam von Laskowski.

ELLA (*smiling*). Quite right. The Polish beauty! Was it not that?

AUL (*beside himself*). Hella?

ELLA (*as before*). Don't become furious, Paul! There's no occasion at all for that! I am not reproaching you in the least! On the contrary, I am of the opinion that you were quite right!

AUL (*comes nearer, plants himself before her*). What are you trying to say? What does all this mean?

ELLA (*with a very superior air*). We had quarreled, you were furious, wanted to revenge yourself, looked about for a fitting object and naturally hit upon . . . whom?

AUL (*turns away*). Why it's simply idiotic to continue answering such questions! (*He walks through the hall excitedly.*)

HELLA. Hit upon whom? . . . With the kind of taste that you do seem to have . . .

PAUL. Hella, I object to that!

HELLA. Why, I am absolutely serious, Paul! You can't expect me to question your taste! I should compromise my own position. No, no, I really agree with you, of all those present she was decidedly the most piquant. The typical beauty that appeals to men! Of course you hit upon her, probably courted her, lavished compliments upon her, all the things that you men do when you suppose that you are in the presence of an inferior woman . . .

PAUL. Hella, now restrain yourself! Or I may tell you something . . .

HELLA. Very well, let us even suppose that you fell in love with her for the time and she with you, that you went into ecstasy over each other and turned each other's heads, then you parted and the next day the intoxication passed off, and, if not on the next day, then on the following one . . . Am I not right? Do you expect me to be jealous of such a thing as that? No, Paul!

PAUL (*in supreme excitement, struggling with himself*). You are a demon! A demon!

HELLA (*has become serious*). I am your friend, Paul! Believe me! I desire nothing but your own good, simply because I care for you and because, I'll be frank with you, I should not want to lose you. You may be convinced of it, Paul, conceited as it may sound, but you will never find another woman like me! One with whom you can share everything! I don't know what you may have said to the Polish woman or what she may have said to you, but do you really suppose that she still knows about that today, even though the most fervent vows were exchanged?

PAUL (*jumps up*). Hella, Hella, you do not know what you are saying.

HELLA. Would you teach me to know my own sex? They aren't all like me, dear Paul. You have been spoiled by me. Very few, indeed, have attained maturity as yet, or even know what they are doing. You can depend upon very few of them. It seems to me that we are in the best possible position to know that, Paul, after our years of work. And I am to fear *such* competition? Expect me to be jealous of a Polish country beauty? Me,—Hella Bernhardy! . . . No, Paul, I have been beyond that type of jealousy for some time! (*She walks up and down slowly.*)

PAUL (*stands at the window, struggling with himself*). Would it not be better to say that you have *never* had it?

HELLA. Possibly! There are some who consider that an advantage.

PAUL. Theorists, yes! The kind that *I* was, once upon a time. But now I know better! Now I know that the absence of jealousy was nothing but an absence of love.

HELLA (*energetically*). That is not true, Paul. I always cared for you!

PAUL. Cared! Cared! A fine word!

HELLA. Why should you demand more than that? I respected you, Paul, valued you as my best friend!

PAUL. All but a little word, a little word . . .

HELLA. What is that?

PAUL. Imagine!

HELLA. I know what you are thinking of! I am not a friend of strong words, but if you insist upon hearing it, I have *loved* you too!

PAUL. You . . . *me!*

HELLA. Yes, I have loved you, Paul, for what you were, the unselfish idealist . . .

PAUL (*bitterly*). Oh, indeed!

HELLA. Yes, Paul! Do not forget about one thing! I am not one of these petty little women, to whom men are

the alpha and omega! If you assumed that, of course you have been mistaken.

PAUL. To be sure! And the mistake has cost me my life!

HELLA. You knew it beforehand, Paul!

PAUL. Because I was blinded!

HELLA. And yet I tell you, say what you please, leave me for instance, but you will not find another woman who can satisfy you after you have had me! I know it and will stake my life on it!

PAUL. Do you rate yourself so highly?

HELLA. I am rating *you* highly, Paul!

PAUL (*wavering*). Do you mean to say I am ruined for happiness? . . . Possibly you are right.

HELLA. Whoever has once become accustomed to the heights of life, will never again descend.

PAUL (*repeats to himself*). Will never again descend.

HELLA. You are too good for a woman of the dead level! See here, Paul, I *have* at times made life a burden to you, I now and then refused to enter upon many things just because my head was full of ideas, possibly I have been too prone to disregard your emotional nature.

PAUL. Hella, do not remind me of that!

HELLA. We must come to an understanding, Paul! All of that may be true. And there *shall* be a change. There *will* be a change, that much I promise you today, but show me the kindness, pack your things and come with me! Today rather than tomorrow! (*She has stepped up to him and places her hands on his shoulders.*)

PAUL (*in the most violent conflict*). Hella! Hella!

HELLA. Look into my face, Paul! Are you happy here?

PAUL (*lowers his head*). Do not ask me, Hella!

HELLA (*triumphantly*). Then you are not! Didn't I know it? I am proud of you for that, Paul!

PAUL (*blurting out*). Hella, do not exult! I *cannot* go back again!

HELLA (*undaunted*). Yes you can! Are these people here meant for you? Do you mean to say that you are

suited to these peasants? You, with your refined instincts? You would think of degrading yourself consciously? Nobody can do that, you least of all! I tell you once more, you are too good for these rubes!

PAUL (*frees himself from her*). Give me time till this evening, Hella! Then I will give you a full explanation!

HELLA (*seizes his hand*). Not thirty minutes, Paul! You are to decide at once! As I have you at this moment, I shall possibly never have you again. Pack your trunk and come with me! Have some one manage the estate. We will go back tomorrow morning and begin the new life with the new year. Thank your stars when you are once more out of this stuffy air. It induces thoughts in you that can never make you happy. Say *yes*, Paul, say that we are going!

PAUL (*has not listened to the last words, listens to what is going on outside*). Do you hear, Hella? (*He frees himself and goes to the foreground. One can hear people singing outside, accompanied by a deep-toned instrument.*)

HELLA (*impatiently*). What in the world is that!

PAUL. I have an idea, the people of the estate, coming to proclaim Saint Sylvester. (*The door at the right is opened.*)

GLYSZINSKI (*enters, makes a sign suggesting silence, points toward the outside*). Do you hear that instrument, madam? That's what they call a pot harp, very interesting!

HELLA (*as before*). Interesting or not. Why must you disturb us just now?

GLYSZINSKI (*offended*). If I had known this, I should not have come! (*About to go out.*)

PAUL (*quite cold again*). Stay right here, dear Glyszinski! You haven't disturbed us up to the present! I do not see that you are disturbing us now!

INSPECTOR (*comes in through the open door*). Sir, the people are outside with the pot harp and want to sing their song.

HELLA (*annoyed*). Oh, tell them to go and be done with it!

PAUL (*quickly*). No, please, Hella, that won't do. That is an old custom here on New Year's eve. Let them sing their song. Besides, I like to hear it. I heard it many a time in my boyhood days.

INSPECTOR. Shall I leave the door open, sir?

PAUL. Please! (*He sits down at the fireplace.*)

HELLA (*steps up to him, with a voice that betrays excitement*). Paul, do not listen to that nonsense out there! Don't let them muddle your head!

PAUL. My head is clearer than ever, Hella! Don't go to any further trouble! I can see my way quite plainly now.

HELLA (*retreats to the sofa, embittered*). And now that old trumpery must interfere too!

[INSPECTOR *stands at the door with* GLYSZINSKI, *motions to those outside. A brief silence, then singing to the accompaniment of the pot harp. The lines run as follows:*]

We wish our dear lord
At his board, a full dish,
And at all four corners
A brown roasted fish:
A crown for our dame;
When the year's course is run
The joy of all joys,
A lusty young son.

HELLA. Will that continue much longer, Paul?

[PAUL *gets up, motions to the inspector and goes out with him. The door is closed behind them. The muffled tones of the pot harp and the singing can still be heard, but the text becomes unintelligible.* GLYSZINSKI, *who also has been listening till now, starts to go out.*]

HELLA (*from the sofa*). One moment, Doctor!

GLYSZINSKI (*absent-minded*). Were you calling me?

HELLA. Why, yes, now that you are here, I might as well make use of the occasion.

GLYSZINSKI (*approaches, somewhat reserved*). What can I do for you, madam?

HELLA. Dear friend, do not be startled. We shall have to part.

GLYSZINSKI (*staggering*). Part? We? . . .

HELLA (*calmly*). Yes, Doctor, it must be!

GLYSZINSKI. Why, who compels us to? No one!

HELLA (*frigidly*). My *decision* compels us, dear friend! Is that sufficient for you?

GLYSZINSKI (*whimpering*). Your decision, Hella? You are cruel.

HELLA. Yes, I myself am sorry, of course. I shall probably miss you quite frequently!

GLYSZINSKI (*as before*). Hella!

HELLA. Especially in connection with my correspondence. You have certainly been a real help to me there. I shall have to carry that burden alone again, now. But what is to be done about it? No other course is possible. We must part.

GLYSZINSKI. But why? At least, give me a reason! Don't turn me out in this fashion.

HELLA. It is necessary on account of my husband, dear friend! I must make this sacrifice for him.

GLYSZINSKI (*raging*). The monster! (*He paces through the hall wildly.*)

HELLA (*with clarity*). You know, it cannot be denied that Paul can't bear you, that he is always annoyed when he sees you . . .

GLYSZINSKI. Do you suppose the reverse is not true?

HELLA. Yes, you men are exasperating. No one can eradicate your jealousy! *That* makes an unconstrained intercourse impossible! But what is to be done? Paul is my husband, *not you*. And so I am compelled to request you to yield.

GLYSZINSKI (*with his hands raised*). Kill me, Hella, but don't turn me out.

HELLA (*wards him off*). A pleasant journey. *You* will be able to find comfort.

GLYSZINSKI. I shall be alone, Hella!

HELLA (*straightening up*). All of us are!

GLYSZINSKI. May I ever see you again, Hella?

HELLA. Possibly later! And now go! I do not care to have my husband find you here when he comes. Why here he is now. (*She pushes him over toward the right, the door has been opened and the singing has ceased in the meantime.*)

PAUL (*has entered, sees* GLYSZINSKI, *frigidly*). Are you still here? If you wish to talk together, I'll go out.

HELLA (*comes over to* PAUL). Please stay, Paul! Glyszinski has just been telling me that he is going to take the night train back to Berlin and he is asking you for a sleigh. Isn't that it, Doctor? (GLYSZINSKI *nods silently, passes by* PAUL *and goes out at the right.*)

PAUL (*frigidly*). What's the use of this farce?

HELLA (*places her hand on his shoulder*). Not a farce, Paul! It is really true! When we get to Berlin tomorrow evening, you will no longer find Glyszinski at our rooms! Are you satisfied now? Have I finally succeeded in pleasing you, you grumbler!

PAUL (*turns away, clenching his fists nervously*). Oh, well!

HELLA. Look into my face, Paul, old comrade! Tell me if you are pleased with your comrade. (PAUL *is silent.*)

HELLA (*frowning*). Now isn't that a proof to you of my fidelity and sincerity?

PAUL. Do not torment me, Hella. My decision is final!

HELLA (*worried*). I don't know what you mean! Surely the matter is settled. We are going, aren't we? (*She looks at him anxiously.*)

PAUL (*frees himself from her*). That is not settled! I shall *remain!* [*A moment of silence.*]

HELLA (*furiously*). You are going to remain?

PAUL (*curtly*). I shall remain . . . And no power on earth will swerve me from my purpose! Not even you, Hella!

HELLA (*plants herself before him*). Are you trying to play the part of the stronger sex? Eye to eye, Paul! No evasions now! Are you playing the farce of the stronger sex?

PAUL. I do what I must do!

HELLA. What you must? . . . Well so must *I*.

PAUL (*bows his head*). I know that, and I am not hindering you!

HELLA (*reflects a moment, then*). And do you realize that that practically means separation for us?

PAUL. I have already told you, Hella, I am prepared for anything.

HELLA (*looks at him sharply; with quick decision*). And what if I stay also, Paul, what then?

PAUL (*is startled*). If you also . . . ? You are not serious about that!

HELLA. Assume that I am! . . . If I should remain also, for your sake? (*She stands before him erectly.*)

PAUL (*furiously*). Don't jest, Hella! It is not the proper moment!

HELLA. I am certainly not jesting! I am your wife! I shall keep you company. *Aren't* you pleased with that?

PAUL (*straightens up*). The dead man stands between us, as you have said. Very well, let that be final! You have wished it so! The bond between us is broken. We have come to the parting of our ways. (*He goes to the left, opens the door and walks out slowly. Deep twilight has set in.*)

HELLA (*stands rigidly and whispers to herself*). To the parting of our ways? (*Waking up, with a wild defiance.*) If I *consent,* I say! . . . If I consent!

ACT V

A room in the garden house. The door in the background leads out-doors. There are windows at both sides of the door and also in the right wall. They all look out upon the garden, but are draped with long, heavy curtains. On the left a door leads into the bedroom. On the same side farther back a tile stove. A divan, table and chair, very near the stove. Bookshelves along the walls. The general impression is that of simple comfort.

It is evening, a short time after the preceding act. A lamp is burning on the table and lights up the no more than fair-sized cozy room.

INSPECTOR ZINDEL *appears in the open door at the background. Before him stands* PAUL.

PAUL. As I was saying, have the bay saddled in case I should still want to take a ride.

INSPECTOR ZINDEL. Very well, sir! Immediately?

PAUL. In about thirty minutes.

INSPECTOR ZINDEL. Shall the coachman bring out the bay or will you come to the stable?

PAUL. Have it brought out! Good-by. (*He comes back into the room.*)

INSPECTOR ZINDEL. Good night, sir! (*He withdraws and closes the door behind him.*)

[PAUL *walks up and down excitedly several times. He seems to be in a violent struggle with himself, sometimes listens for something outside, shakes his head, groans deeply, finally throws himself on the divan and crosses his arms under his head. Short pause.*]

HELLA (*opens the door in the background, enters and looks around*). Are you here, Paul? (*She has thrown a shawl around her.*)

PAUL (*jumps up, disappointed*). Hella, you? (*Sits down.*)

HELLA (*approaches*). Yes, it is I, Hella! Who else? Were you expecting some one else?

PAUL (*painfully*). Why do you still insist upon coming? Don't make it unnecessarily hard for both of us.

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SHEEP

HEINRICH VON ZÜGEL

HELLA (*calmly*). I am waiting for an explanation from you. Since you will not give it to me of your own accord, I am compelled to get it. It seems to me I have a right to claim it.

PAUL. You certainly have.

HELLA (*with folded arms*). Please, then!

PAUL. Hella, what is the purpose of this? You do know everything now!

HELLA. I know nothing. I should like to find out from you.

PAUL (*gets up*). Very well, then I will tell you.

HELLA. I assume that the Polish woman is mixed up in this affair.

PAUL. So you do know! Why in the world are you going to the trouble of asking me?

HELLA. So it's really true? I am to stand aside for a little goose from the country!

PAUL (*starts up*). A little goose from the country? . . . Hella, control your tongue!

HELLA (*walks up and down*). If it were not so ridiculous, it would be exasperating!

PAUL. The woman under discussion is not a little goose from the country, my dear, just as little as you are one from the city.

HELLA. Thank you for your flattering comparison.

PAUL. That woman has had her struggles and trials as much as you have, and in spite of it has remained a woman, which *you* have *not!*

HELLA (*scornfully*). Well, well. Are you now asserting your real nature? Are you throwing off the mask? Go on! Go on!

PAUL (*controls himself with an effort*). That is all! I am only standing up for one who is dear to me!

HELLA. Ha, ha! Dear! Today and tomorrow!

PAUL. You are mistaken, Hella! I believe in Antoinette, and I shall not swerve from that.

HELLA (*with a sudden inspiration*). Antoinette . . . Antoinette . . . Why that name . . .

PAUL. Let me assist you, Hella. Antoinette is the friend of my youth . . .

HELLA (*nonplussed*). The friend of your youth?

PAUL. Indeed, Hella, I have known her longer than I have known you.

HELLA. The one whom you were to marry once upon a time? Is it she?

PAUL (*sadly*). Whom I was to marry, whom I refused on your account, Hella.

HELLA. You met *her* again here?

PAUL. As Mrs. von Laskowski, yes, Hella!

HELLA (*starts for him, with a savage expression*). And you kept that from me?

PAUL. Why you did not give me a chance to speak, when I tried to tell you.

HELLA. So that was the confidence you had! Well, of course, then, of course!

PAUL. Oh, my confidence, Hella! Don't mention that. That had died long before!

HELLA. To be deceived so shamefully.

PAUL. Blame yourself! You have killed it systematically!

HELLA. I? What else, pray tell!

PAUL. Yes, by forever considering only yourself and never me! That could not help but stifle all my feelings in time. I fought against it as long as I could, Hella, but it had to come to an end some time.

HELLA. And I went about without misgivings, while behind my back a conspiracy was forming . . .

PAUL (*shrugging his shoulders*). Who conspired?

HELLA. All of you! This whole owl's nest of a house was in league against me! You had conspired against me, you and your ilk, simply because I was superior to you, that's the reason why you wanted to shoulder me off! Do you suppose I don't realize that? Very well, let baseness prevail! I am willing to retreat!

PAUL. It always has been your trick, Hella, to play the part of offended innocence! It is well that you are re-

minding me of that in this hour! You are making the step easier for me than I had hoped.

HELLA. This is the thanks!

PAUL. Thanks! . . . How in the world could you expect thanks?

HELLA (*with infuriated hatred*). Because I made a *human being* of you!

PAUL (*starting up*). Hella, you are making use of *words!*

HELLA (*beside herself*). Yes, made a *human* being of you. I will repeat it ten times over!

PAUL. Won't you kindly call in the whole estate with your shrieking.

HELLA. The whole world, for all I care! What were you when you came into my hands? A crude student, utterly helpless, whom I directed into the proper channels, *I*, single handed! Without me you would have gone to the dogs or you might have become one of those novelists whom no one reads! I was the first one to put sound ideas in your head, roused your talent and pointed out to you all that is really *demanded.* Through me you attained a name and reputation, and now that you are fortunate enough to be that far along, you go and throw yourself away upon a Polish goose, you . . . you?

PAUL (*as if under a lash*). There are limits to all things, Hella, even to consideration for your sex! Do not assume that you still have me in your power. It has lasted *fifteen* years. It is *over* today. Do you suppose I ought to thank you for sapping everything from me, my will-power, my strength, my real talents, all the faith in love and beauty that was once in me, which you have systematically driven out with your infernal leveling process? Where shall I ever find a trace of all that again? I might seek for a hundred years and not strike that path again! I might have become an artist, at life or art itself, who cares! And you

have made me a beggar, a machine, that reels off its uniform sing-song day after day! You have cheated me out of my life, you imp! . . . Give it back to me! (*He stands before her, breathing heavily, struggling for air.*)

HELLA (*has become quite calm*). Why did you *allow* yourself to be cheated. It's your own fault!

PAUL (*suddenly calm, but sad and resigned*). That is a profound word, Hella! Why have you . . . *allowed* . . . yourself to be cheated!

HELLA. You had your will-power just as I had mine. Why did you not make use of it?

PAUL. *You*, with your ideas, would say *that*, Hella?

HELLA. Yes, *one* or the other is stronger, of course! Why should we women not be stronger?

PAUL (*turns away*). That is sufficient, Hella. We are through with each other. There is nothing more to say.

HELLA. As you may decide. So it is really all over between us?

PAUL (*stands in deep thought and murmurs to himself*). Why did you *allow* yourself to be cheated? Terrible! Terrible! Why must this conviction come too late?

HELLA (*in a lurking manner*). I suppose you are going to the other woman now?

PAUL (*breathes a deep sigh of relief*). We are going together!

HELLA (*with a sudden inspiration*). If I *release* you, you mean!

PAUL (*quite calmly*). I suppose you will be *compelled* to!

HELLA (*triumphantly*). Who can compel me?

PAUL (*starts up*). Hella, then . . . Then . . .

HELLA. Well? Then?

PAUL (*controls himself, with a strange expression*). Then we shall see who is the stronger. (*The door in the background has been opened.*)

ANTOINETTE (*has entered quickly, starts at seeing* HELLA, *stops in the background and says, in a subdued voice*). Paul!

PAUL (*turns around frightened, exclaims passionately*). Antoinette! (*He rushes up to her, about to embrace her. She turns him aside gently and looks at* HELLA. *The two press each other's hands firmly and look into each other's eyes.*)

ANTOINETTE (*softly*). I am here, Paul.

PAUL. Thank you, thank you, dear!

HELLA (*has recovered from her astonishment and starts for* ANTOINETTE, *savagely*). Who *are* you, and what do you want here?

PAUL (*steps between them, very seriously*). Hella . . . If you please . . .

ANTOINETTE (*restrains* PAUL, *with a quiet, distinguished bearing*). I am not afraid, Paul. Just continue, madam.

HELLA (*furiously*). Who has given you the right to intrude here?

[PAUL *has retreated a little in response to* ANTOINETTE'S *entreating glance.*]

ANTOINETTE. Ask yourself, madam. Who was here earlier, you or I?

HELLA (*turns away abruptly*). I shall not quarrel with you, I shall simply show you the door!

PAUL. Well, well. We are standing on *my* soil now, Hella! Remember that!

HELLA (*infuriated*). Oh, I suppose you are insisting upon your rights!

PAUL. Why I simply must. You are forcing me to do so!

HELLA. Very well. I am doing that very thing!

PAUL (*clenches his fists*). Really now! You will not change your mind?

HELLA. I will not change my mind. I shall not release you. Now do as you please!

PAUL. You will not release me?

HELLA. No!

PAUL (*beside himself*). You! . . . You! . . .

ANTOINETTE. Be quiet, dear! No mortal can interfere with us.

HELLA. How affectionate! You probably suppose that you have him *already?* That I shall simply go and your happiness is complete! Don't deceive yourself! You shall not enjoy happiness when I am compelled to battle.

ANTOINETTE. Did I not battle?

HELLA. Your little battle. Simply because you did not happen to get the man that you wanted! We have had battles of quite other dimensions!

ANTOINETTE. Do not believe for a moment that you have a right to look down upon me! I shall pick up your gauntlet in the things that really count.

HELLA. You? My gauntlet? Ha, ha!

ANTOINETTE. You *too* are only a woman, just as I am, and although you may rate yourself ever so much higher, you will remain a woman nevertheless!

HELLA. Woman or not! I shall show you with whom you have to deal! I shall not retreat and that settles it! Under the *law,* you shall never get each other. Now show your courage.

ANTOINETTE. I shall show you my courage!

HELLA. Dare to do so without the law! Bear the consequences! Suffer yourself to be cast out by all the world! Have them point their fingers at you! That is the absconded wife who is living with a run-away husband! Take that ban upon you! Do you see now? *I* should. I should scorn the whole world! Can you do the same?

[ANTOINETTE *bows her head and is silent.*]

HELLA (*triumphantly*). You can't do that! I knew it very well.

ANTOINETTE (*composed*). What I can and what I can*not* do is in the hand of God. That is all that I have to say to you.

HELLA. That is all I need to know! I wish you a happy life!

PAUL (*has been restraining himself, steps up to* HELLA). Hella, one last word!

HELLA. It has been spoken!

PAUL. Do you remember what we agreed to do once upon a time?

HELLA. I don't remember anything now!

PAUL. Hella, remember! On our wedding day we agreed, if either one of us, from an honest conviction, should demand his freedom, he should have it, our compact should be ended. That occasion is here. Remember!

HELLA. I don't remember a thing now. *You* certainly do not.

ANTOINETTE. Don't say another word, dear!

HELLA. It would certainly do no good! Good-by! As for the rest, we shall see!

PAUL. We shall.

[HELLA *goes out with head erect and closes the door behind her. Pause.* PAUL *and* ANTOINETTE *stand face to face for a moment and look into each other's eyes.*]

PAUL (*morosely*). Now the bridges are burned behind us!

ANTOINETTE. They are, dear. Do you realize it?

PAUL. What now? What now?

ANTOINETTE (*sinks upon his breast*). Paul! My Paul!

PAUL (*embraces her, presses her to him fervently. They embrace in silence, then he draws her down beside him on the divan, and looks at her affectionately*). It was a long time before you came, Toinette.

ANTOINETTE. But now I am here, and shall leave you no more.

PAUL. You will not leave me, beloved?

ANTOINETTE. I shall never leave you.

PAUL. And I shall not leave you.

ANTOINETTE. And you will not leave me. (*They embrace each other.*)

PAUL (*straightens up*). Why did you stay so long, Toinette?

ANTOINETTE. Much was to be set in order, dear.

PAUL. I was almost beginning to doubt you.

ANTOINETTE. You wicked man. Then I should have been forced to go alone.

PAUL. Alone? Where would you have gone, you poor, helpless, little soul.

ANTOINETTE. Do not think that! I have the thing that will help me. That is why I am so late!

PAUL (*shrinking*). Antoinette!

ANTOINETTE (*smiling*). Don't be frightened, dear! Two drops and all is over.

PAUL (*has risen*). You would?

ANTOINETTE (*gently*). Yes, I will. Are you going with me?

PAUL. Toinette! Toinette! (*Walks through the room excitedly.*)

ANTOINETTE. Think of her words, she will not release you!

PAUL. Is Hella right? You *haven't* the courage?

ANTOINETTE (*passionately*). Courage I have, Paul. To the very end!

PAUL. Very well, then we shall undertake it in spite of them all.

ANTOINETTE (*excited*). The absconded wife! The runaway husband! Did you forget those words? Those terrible words! They keep on ringing in my ears. Are we to live in the scorn of people. I cannot, Paul.

PAUL. You do not *want* to.

ANTOINETTE. No, I *do* not want to! I do not care to descend into the mire! I have hated it all of my life. They shall not be able to reproach us for anything.

PAUL (*in passionate excitement*). Is it to be? Is it to be? (ANTOINETTE *nods silently*).

PAUL (*suddenly overcome with emotion, falls upon his knees before* ANTOINETTE *and presses his head to her bosom*). Kiss me, kiss me, beloved!

ANTOINETTE (*puts her arms around him*). Here on your brow, my lover! Are you content? (*She kisses his brow.*)

PAUL. Content in life or death. (*He gets up, sits down beside* ANTOINETTE *and looks at her*). Are you weeping, sweetheart?

ANTOINETTE (*lowers her head, gently*). Why, you are, too, Paul!

PAUL (*passes his hand over his eyes*). All over! Tell me what you think now, dear!

ANTOINETTE (*also controlling her tears*). It is this, dear, our time is short. I rode away from my husband! He was riding ahead of me in the sleigh. I had told him that I would follow and I mounted my horse and came to you.

PAUL (*puts his arms around her*). Courageous soul! Rode through the forest?

ANTOINETTE. Right on through the forest. The sun was already going down, when I set out.

PAUL. The sun of New Year's Eve . . . Did *you* see it too?

ANTOINETTE. When it was down, the gloaming afforded me light, and later the snow.

PAUL (*sadly with a touch of roguishness*). Dearest, when the sun is down, there is nothing left to give light.

ANTOINETTE. Indeed, my beloved, indeed! Then come the stars. They are finer.

PAUL. Do you believe in the stars?

ANTOINETTE. You heretic, I believe! . . .

PAUL. Still believe in heaven and hell?

ANTOINETTE. No longer for us. For us, the stars.

PAUL. Do you think so? For us?

ANTOINETTE. For us and lovers such as we are!

PAUL. How do you know that?

ANTOINETTE. Since I have you!

PAUL. Then I believe it too!

ANTOINETTE. My friend! My beloved! My life! (*She presses him to her.*)

PAUL. My beloved! My wife! [*Blissful silence.*]

ANTOINETTE (*straightens up*). Don't you hear steps? (*She listens.*)

PAUL (*also listens*). Where, pray tell.

ANTOINETTE (*has risen*). Out in the garden. It seemed so to me.

PAUL. I hear nothing. All is still.

ANTOINETTE (*leans upon him*). I am afraid, Paul.

PAUL. Afraid? Of what?

ANTOINETTE. That he will come and get me. Our time is short.

PAUL. Then I will protect you.

ANTOINETTE. Paul, I don't want to see him again! I don't want to see another soul!

PAUL (*looks at her with glowing eyes*). How beautiful you are now, Toinette!

ANTOINETTE. Am I beautiful? Am I beautiful. For you, my Paul, for you!

PAUL. For me. (*He puts his arms around her.*)

ANTOINETTE (*proudly*). I am still beautiful and young and yet I shall cast it away. I am not afraid.

PAUL (*his arms about her*). We are not afraid!

ANTOINETTE. Out into night and death together with you!

PAUL. It is not worth living! We have realized that!

ANTOINETTE (*looks up at him, smiling*). Haven't we, Paul, we two lost creatures? (*In each other's embrace, they are silent for a moment.*)

ANTOINETTE (*roguishly*). Do you remember, dear, what you used to do when you were a little boy?

PAUL. No, sweetheart, tell me!

ANTOINETTE. Try to recall, dear. What did you do when your mother gave us bread and cake.

PAUL. I took the bread first, is that what you mean, and then finished up with the cake.

ANTOINETTE (*shakes her finger at him*). Kept the cake for the end, you crafty fellow!

PAUL (*is forced to laugh*). Kept the best part for the end! Yes that's what I did.

ANTOINETTE (*on his breast*). Just wait, you rogue. Now I'll make you answer. Tell me, what am *I* now, bread or cake?

PAUL. My last, my best, my all, that's what you are to me!

ANTOINETTE. There can be no joy beyond this. Shall we become old and gray and withered? Come, my dear, come!

PAUL (*looks at her for a long time*). Do you know of what you remind me now?

ANTOINETTE. Of what, Paul?

PAUL. That is just the way you stood in our park when you were a girl, out there under the alders, and beckoned to me when you wanted me to come and play with you.

ANTOINETTE (*beckoning roguishly*). Come on, Paul. Come on. Isn't that it?

PAUL. Just so! Just so!

ANTOINETTE. Catch me, Paulie! . . . Catch me! (*She runs to the left, opens the door and remains standing.*)

PAUL (*runs after her and seizes her*). Now I have you, you rogue?

ANTOINETTE (*in his arms*). Have me and hold me fast!

PAUL. New Year's Eve! New Year's Eve! . . . Is it here?

ANTOINETTE. It's no longer necessary for us to cast lead to find out how long we are to live. We know!

PAUL. Soon we shall know nothing!

ANTOINETTE. Soon we shall know all!

PAUL. On your stars, do you mean?

ANTOINETTE (*nods*). On our star, my lover, you and I shall meet again.

PAUL. There we shall meet again!

ANTOINETTE (*starts, and listens*). Do you hear?

[INSPECTOR ZINDEL *opens the door in the background and stands in the door.* PAUL *and* ANTOINETTE *let go of each other, keeping their places.*]

INSPECTOR ZINDEL. The bay is bridled, sir, and stands out here.

ANTOINETTE (*has an inspiration*). The bay bridled? Is my gray there, too?

INSPECTOR ZINDEL. It is, madam!

ANTOINETTE. Very well. Stay with the horses. We shall be there immediately!

[INSPECTOR ZINDEL *withdraws.*]

PAUL (*astonished*). What is it, dear? What do you intend to do?

ANTOINETTE (*with frantic passion*). To our horses, dearest! To our horses!

PAUL (*incredulously*). Out into the world, after all?

ANTOINETTE (*with a wild fervor*). Out with you into the night . . . the night of Saint Sylvester!

PAUL (*sadly*). Stay here, Toinette! Why begin the farce anew! Let it end upon this soil, that nurtured our childhood!

ANTOINETTE (*imploring*). Come, dearest, to our horses! Let us ride to my home.

PAUL. To your home?

ANTOINETTE. To Rukkoschin, the house of my fathers.

PAUL. Do you wish to go there?

ANTOINETTE. I wish to see it once more!

PAUL. And then we shall be ready?

ANTOINETTE. The house lies secluded and empty and dead.

PAUL. Only the spirits of your fathers are stirring.

ANTOINETTE. But I know of one room where I played as a child, that has suffered no change.

PAUL (*overcome*). To our horses! To our horses!

ANTOINETTE. The night is clear. Many thousands of stars will light the way. We shall ride through the forest. Right across the lake. The ice is firm.

[*She draws him out.*]

PAUL (*with a gesture toward the outside*). Farewell, Hella! Your reign is over! . . . We are returning to Mother Earth! (*They depart through the door in the background.*)

HUGO VON HOFMANNSTHAL

THE MARRIAGE OF SOBEIDE

A Dramatic Poem

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

A Wealthy Merchant
Sobeide, *his young wife*
Bachtjar, *the Jeweler*, Sobeide's *father*
Sobeide's Mother
Shalnassar, *the Carpet-dealer*
Ganem, *his son*
Gulistane, *a ship-captain's widow*
An Armenian Slave
An old Camel-driver
A Gardener
His wife
Bahram, *Servant of the* Merchant
A Debtor of Shalnassar

An old city in the Kingdom of Persia

The time is the evening and the night after the wedding-feast of the wealthy merchant

THE MARRIAGE OF SOBEIDE (1899)

TRANSLATED BY BAYARD QUINCY MORGAN, PH.D.

Assistant Professor of German, University of Wisconsin

SCENE I

Sleeping chamber in the house of the wealthy MERCHANT. *To the rear an alcove with dark curtains. To the left a door, to the right a small door leading into the garden, and a window. Candles.*

Enter the MERCHANT *and his old Servant,* BAHRAM.

ERCHANT. Speak, Bahram, gav'st thou heed
unto my bride?

SERVANT. Heed, in what sense?

MERCHANT. She is not cheerful, Bahram.

SERVANT. She is a serious girl. And 'tis a moment
That sobers e'en the flightiest, remember.

MERCHANT. Not she alone: the more I bade them kindle
Lights upon lights, the heavier hung a cloud
About this wedding-feast. They smiled like masks,
And I could catch the dark or pitying glances
They flung to one another; and her father
Would oft subside into a dark reflection,
From which he roused himself with laughter forced,
Unnatural.

SERVANT. My Lord, our common clay
Endureth none too well the quiet splendor
Of hours like these. We are but little used
To aught but dragging through our daily round
Of littleness. And on such high occasions
We feel the quiet opening of a portal
From which an unfamiliar, icy breath
Our spirit chills, and warns us of the grave.
As in a glass we then behold our own
Forgotten likeness come into our vision,
And easier 'twere to weep than to be merry.

MERCHANT. She tasted not a morsel that thou placed
Before her.

SERVANT. Lord, her modest maidenhood
Was like a noose about her throat; but yet
She ate some of the fruit.

MERCHANT. Yes, one small seed,
I noticed that, 'twas a pomegranate seed.

SERVANT. Then too she suddenly bethought herself
That wine, a blood-red flame in sparkling crystal,
Before her stood, and raised the splendid goblet
And drank as with a sudden firm resolve
The half of it, so that the color flooded
Her cheeks, and deep she sighed as with relief.

MERCHANT. Methinks that was no happy resolution.
So acts the man who would deceive himself,
And veils his glance, because the road affrights him.

SERVANT. Vain torments these: this is but women's way.

MERCHANT (*looks about the room, smiles*).
A mirror, too, I see thou hast provided.

SERVANT. Thine own command, the mirror is thy mother's,
Brought hither from her chamber with the rest.
And thou thyself didst bid me, just this one . . .

MERCHANT. What, did I so? It was a moment, then,
When I was shrewder than I am just now.
Yes, yes, a youthful bride must have a mirror.

SERVANT. Now I will go to fetch your mother's goblet
And bring the cooling evening drink.

MERCHANT. Ah yes,
Go, my good Bahram, fetch the evening drink.
[*Exit* BAHRAM.]
Thou mirror of my mother, dwells no glimmer
In thee of her sweet pallid smile, to rise
As from the dewy mirror of a well-spring?
Her smile, the faintest, loveliest I have known,
Was like the flutter of a tiny birdling,
That sleeps its last upon the hollowed hand.
[*Stands before the mirror.*]

No, naught but glass. Too long it empty stood.
Only a face that does not smile — my own.
My Self, beheld with my own eyes, so vacant
As if one glass but mirrored forth another,
Unconscious.— Oh for higher vision yet,
For but one moment infinitely brief,
To see how stands upon *her* spirit's mirror
My image! Is't an old man she beholds?
Am I as young as oft I deem myself,
When in the silent night I lie and listen
To hear my blood surge through its winding course?
Is it not being young, to have so little
Of rigidness or hardness in my nature?
I feel as if my spirit, nursed and reared
On nourishment so dreamlike, bloodless, thin,
Were youthful still. How else should visit me
This faltering feeling, just as in my boyhood,
This strange uneasiness of happiness,
As if 'twould slip each moment from my hands
And fade like shadows? Can the old feel this?
No, old men take the world for something hard
And dreamless; what their fingers grasp and hold,
They hold. While *I* am even now a-quiver
With all this moment brings; no youthful monarch
Were more intoxicated, when the breezes
Should waft to him that cryptic word "possession." [*He nears the window.*]
Ah, lovely stars, are ye out there as ever?
From out of this unstable mortal body
To look upon your courses in your whirling
Eternal orbits — that has been the food
That bore with ease my years, until I thought
I scarcely felt my feet upon the earth.
And have I really withered, while my eyes

I beg you, go; for this unwonted thing,
As new to me as wine, has greater power,
And makes me view my life and his and yours
With other eyes than were perhaps befitting.
(*With a forced smile.*)
I beg you, look not in such wonderment:
Such notions oft go flitting through my head,
Nor dream nor yet reality. Ye know,
As child I was much worse. And then the dance
Which I invented, is't not such a thing:
Wherein from torchlight and the black of night
I made myself a shifting, drifting palace,
From which I then emerged, as do the queens
Of fire and ocean in the fairy-tales.
[*The* MOTHER *has meanwhile thrown the* FATHER *a glance and has noiselessly gone to the door. Noiselessly the* FATHER *has followed her. Now they stand with clasped hands in the doorway, to vanish the next moment.*]
Ye go so softly? What? And are ye gone?
[*She turns and stands silent, her eyes cast down.*]

MERCHANT (*caresses her with a long look, then goes to the rear, but stops again irresolute*).
Wilt thou not lay aside thy veil?
[SOBEIDE *starts, looks about her absent-mindedly.*]

MERCHANT (*points to the glass*). 'Tis yonder.
[SOBEIDE *takes no step, loosens mechanically the veil from her hair.*]

MERCHANT. Here — in thy house — and just at first perhaps
Thou mayst lack much. This house, since mother's death,
Has grown disused to serve a woman's needs.
And our utensils here do not display
The splendor and magnificence in which

LAKE IN THE GRUNEWALD

From the Painting by Walter Leistikow

I fain had seen thee framed, but yet for me
Scant beauty dwells in what all men may have:
So from the stuffy air of chests and caskets
That, like the sandal-wood in sanctuary,
Half took my breath, I had all these removed
And placed there in thy chamber for thy service,
Where something of my mother's presence still—
Forgive me—seems to cling. I thought in this
To show and teach thee something . . . On some things
There are mute symbols deeply stamped, with which
The air grows laden in our quiet hours,
And fuses something with our consciousness
That could not well be said, nor was to be.

[*Pause.*]

It hurts me when I see thee thus, benumbed
By all these overladen moments, that
Scarce walk upright beneath their heavy burden.
But let me say, all good things enter in
Our souls in quiet unpretentious ways,
And not with show and noise. One keeps expecting
To see Life suddenly appear somewhere
On the horizon, like a new domain,
A country yet untrodden. Yet the distance
Remains unpeopled; slowly then our eyes
Perceive its traces ling'ring here and yonder,
And that it compasses, embraces us,
And bears us, is in us, and nowhere fails us.
The words I say can give thee little pleasure,
Too much renunciation rings in them.
But not to me, by Heaven! My sweet child,
Not like a beggar do I feel before thee,

(*With a long look at her.*)

However fair thy youth's consummate glory

Envelop thee from top to toe . . . thou knowest
Not much about my life, thou hast but seen
A fragment of its shell, as dimly gleaming
In shadows through the op'nings of a hedge.
I wish thine eye might pierce the heart of it:
As fully as the earth beneath my feet
Have I put from me all things low and common.
Callst thou that easy, since I now am old?
'Tis true, I've lost some friends by death ere this —
And thou at most thy grandam — many friends,
And those that live, where are they scattered now?
To them was linked the long forgotten quiver
Of nights of youth, those evening hours in which
Vague fear with monstrous, sultry happiness
Was mingled, and the perfume of young locks
With darkling breezes wafted from the stars.
* * * * * * * *
The glamor of the motley towns and cities,
The distant purple haze — that now is gone,
Nor could be found, though I should go to seek it;
But here within me, when I call, there rises
A something, rules my spirit, and I feel
As if it might in thee as well —
[*He changes his tone.*]
Knowst thou the day, on which thou needst must dance
Before thy father's guests? A smile unfading
Dwelt on thy lips, than any string of pearls
More fair, and sadder than my mother's smile,
Which thou hast ne'er beheld. This is to blame:
That smile and dance were interlaced, like wondrous
Fingers of dreamlike possibilities.
Wouldst thou they ne'er had been, since they're to blame,
My wife, that thou art standing here with me

IDE (*in such a tone that her voice is heard to strike her teeth*).
Commandest thou that I should dance? If not,
Commandest thou some other thing?

CHANT. My wife,
How wild thou speakest with me, and how strangely!

IDE. Wild? Hard, perhaps: my fate is none too soft.
Thou speakest as a good man speaks, then be
So good as not to speak with me today.
I am thy chattel, take me as thy chattel,
And let me, like a chattel, keep my thoughts
Unspoken, only uttered to myself!
[*She weeps silently with compressed lips, her face turned toward the darkness.*]

CHANT. So many tears and in such silence. This
Is not the shudder that relieves the anguish
Of youth. Here there is deeper pain to quiet
Than inborn rigidness of timid spirits.

IDE. Lord, shouldst thou waken in the night and find
Me weeping thus whenas I seem to sleep,
Then wake me, lest I do what thy good right
Forbids me. For in dreams upon thy bed
I shall be seeing then another man
And longing for him; this were not becoming,
And makes me shudder at myself to think it.
Oh promise me that thou wilt then awake me!
[*Pause. The* MERCHANT *is silent; deep feeling darkens his face.*]
No question who it is? Does that not matter?
No? But thy face is gloomy and thou breathest
With effort? Then I will myself confess it:
Thou hast beheld him at our house ere now,
His name is Ganem — son of old Shalnassar,
The carpet-dealer — and 'tis three years now
Since first I knew him. But since yesteryear
I have not seen him more.

This I have said, this last thing I reveal,
Because I will permit no sediment
Of secrecy and lies to lurk within me.
I care not thou shouldst know: I am no vessel
Sold off as pure, but lined with verdigris
To eat its bottom out—and then because
I wanted to be spared his frequent visits
In this abode—for that were hard to bear.

MERCHANT (*threateningly, but soon choked by wrath and pain*).
Thou! Thou hast . . . thou hast . . .
[*He claps his hands to his face.*]

SOBEIDE. Thou weepest too, then, on thy wedding-day!
And have I spoiled some dream for thee? Look hither:
Thou sayst, I am so young, and this, and this—
[*Points to hair and cheeks.*]
Are young indeed, but weary is my spirit,
So weary, that there is no word to tell
How weary and how aged before my time.
We are one age, perhaps thou art the younger.
In conversation once thou saidst to me,
That almost all the years since I was born
Had passed for thee in sitting in thy gardens
And in the quiet tower thou hast builded,
To watch the stars from it. 'Twas on that day
It first seemed possible to me, that thy
And, more than that, my father's fond desire
Might be . . . fulfilled. For I supposed the air
In this thy house must have some lightness in it,
So light, so burdenless!—And in our house
It was so overladen with remembrance,
The airy corpse of sleepless nights went floating
All through it, and on all the walls there hung
The burden of those fondly cherished hopes,
Once vivid, then rejected, long since faded.

The glances of my parents rested ever
Upon me, and their whole existence.— Well,
Too well I knew each quiver of an eyelash,
And over all there was the constant pressure
Of thy commanding will, that on my soul
Lay like a coverlet of heavy sleep.
'Twas common, that I yielded at the last:
I seek no other word. And yet the common
Is strong, and all our life is full of it.
How could I thrust it down and trample on it,
While I was floundering in it up to the neck?

ERCHANT. So my desire lay like a cruel nightmare
Upon thy breast! Then thou must surely hate me . . .

BEIDE. I hate thee not, I have not learned to hate,
And only just began to learn to love.
The lessons stopped, but I am fairly able
To do such things as, with that smile thou knowest,
To dance, with heart as heavy as the stones,
To face each heavy day, each coming evil
With smiles: the utmost power of my youth
That smile consumed, but to the bitter end
I wore it, and so here I stand with thee.

ERCHANT. In this I see but shadowy connection.

BEIDE. How I connect my being forced to smile
And finally becoming wife to thee?
Wilt thou know this? And must I tell thee all?
Then knowst thou, since thou art rich, so little
Of life, and hast no eyes for aught but stars,
And flowers in thy heated greenhouse? Listen:
This is the cause: a poor man is my father,
Not always poor, much worse: once rich, now poor,
And many people's debtor, most of all
Thy debtor. And his starving spirit lived
Upon my smile, as other people's hearts

On other lies. These last years, since thou camest,
I knew my task; till then had been my schooling.

MERCHANT. And so became my wife!
As quick she would have grasped her pointed shears
And opened up a vein and with her blood
Have let her life run out into a bath,
If that had been the price with which to purchase
Her father's freedom from his creditor!
. . . Thus is a wish fulfilled!

SOBEIDE. Be not distressed. This is the way of life.
I am myself as in a waking dream.
As one who, taken sick, no more aright
Compares his thoughts, nor any more remembers
How on the day before he viewed a matter,
Nor what he then had feared or had expected:
He cannot look with eyes of yesterday . . .
So also when we reach the worser stages
Of that great illness: Life. I scarcely know
Myself how great my fear of many things,
How much I longed for others, and I feel,
When some things cross my mind, as if it were
Another woman's fate, and not my own,
Just some one that I know about, not I.
I tell thee, I am bitter, but not evil:
And if at first I was too wild for thee,
There will be no deception in me later,
When I shall sit at ease and watch thy gardeners.
My head is tired out. I grow so dizzy,
When I must keep two things within myself
That fight against each other. Much too long
Have I been forced to do this. Give me peace!
Thou giv'st me this, and for that I am grateful.

Call not this little: terrible in weakness
Is everything that grows on shifting sands
Of doubt. But here is perfect certainty.

ERCHANT. And how of him?

BEIDE. That too must not distress thee.
'Twere hard to judge, had I concealed it from thee;
I have revealed it now, so let it rest.

ERCHANT. Thou art not free of him!

BEIDE. So thinkest thou?
When is one "free?" Things have no hold on us,
Except we have in us the will to hold them.
All that is past. [*Gesture.*]

ERCHANT (*after a pause*).
His love was like to thine?
[SOBEIDE *nods.*]
But then, why then, how has it come to pass
That he was not the one—

BEIDE. Why, we were poor!
No, more than poor, thou knowst. His father, too.
Poor too. Besides, a gloomy man, as hard
As mine was all too soft, and on him weighing
As mine on me. The whole much easier
To live through than to put in words. For years
It lasted. We were children when it started,
Ere long as tired as foals, too early harnessed
For drawing heavy wagons in the harvest.

ERCHANT. But let me tell thee, this cannot be true
About his father. I know old Shalnassar,
The carpet-dealer. Well, he is a graybeard,
And he who will may speak good of his name,
But I will not. A wicked, bad old man!

BEIDE. May be, all one. To him it is his father.
I ne'er have seen him. Ganem sees him so.

He calls him sick, is saddened when he speaks
Of him. And therefore I have never seen him,
That is, not since my childhood, when I saw
Him now and then upon the window leaning.

MERCHANT. But he's not poor, no, anything but poor!

SOBEIDE (*sure of her facts, sadly smiling*).
Thinkst thou I should be here?

MERCHANT. And he?

SOBEIDE. What, he?

MERCHANT. He clearly made thee feel
He thought impossible, what he and thou
Had wished for years and long held possible?

SOBEIDE. Why, for it was impossible? . . . and then
"Had wished for years"—thou seest, all these matters
Are different, and the words we use
Are different. At one time this has ripened,
But to decay again. For there are moments
With cheeks that burn like the eternal suns—
When somewhere hovers mute an unconfessed
Confession, somewhere vanishes in air
The echo of a call that never reached
Its utterance; here in me something whispers,
"I yielded to him;" mark: in thought! "I yielded"—
The following moment swallows everything,
As night the lightning flash . . . How all began
And ended? Well, in this wise: first I sealed
My lips, soon then set seal upon my eye-lids,
And he—

MERCHANT. Well, how was he?

SOBEIDE. Why, very noble.
As one who seeks to sully his own image
In other eyes, to spare that other pain—
Quite different, no longer kind as once
—It was the greatest kindness, so to act—

His spirit rent and full of mockery, that
Perhaps was bitterer to himself than me,
Just like an actor oftentimes, so strangely
With set intent. At other times again
Discoursing of the future, of the time
When I should give my hand—

MERCHANT (*vehemently*). To me?

SOBEIDE (*coldly*).

When I should give my hand to any other;—
Describing what he knew that I should never
Endure, if life should ever take that form.
As little as himself would e'er have borne it
A single hour, for he but made a show,
Acquaint with me, and knowing it would cost
The less of pain to wrench my heart from him,
So soon as I had come to doubt his faith.

* * * * * * * *

'Twas too well acted, but what wealth of goodness
Was there.

MERCHANT. The greatest goodness, *if* 'twas really
Naught but a pose assumed.

SOBEIDE (*passionately*).

I beg thee, husband,
This one thing: ruin not our life together.
As yet 'tis young and blind as tiny fledglings,
A single speech like this might swiftly slay it!
I shall not be an evil wife to thee:
I mean that slowly I shall find, perhaps,
In other things a little of that bliss
For which I held out eager fingers, thinking
There was a land quite full of it, both air
And earth, and one might enter into it.
I know by now that *I* was not to enter . . .
I shall be almost happy in that day,
All longing, painless, shared 'twixt past and present,

Like shining sunlight on the fresh green trees,
And like an unburdened sky behind the garden
The future: empty, yet quite full of light . . .
But we must give it time to grow:
As yet confusion everywhere prevails.
Thou must assist me, it must never happen
That with ill-chosen words thou link this present
Too strongly to the life which now is over.
They must be parted by a wall of glass,
As airtight and as rigid as in dreams.

(*At the window.*)

That evening must not come, that should discover
Me sitting at this window without thee:
—Just not to be at home, not from the window
Of my long girlhood's chamber to look out
Into the darkness, has a dangerous,
Peculiar and confusing power, as if
I lay upon the open road, no man's possession,
As fully mine as never in my dreams!
A maiden's life is much more strictly ruled
By pressure of the air, than thou conceivest,
To whom it seems most natural to be free.
The evening ne'er must come, when I should thus
Stand here, with all the weight of heavy shadows,
My parents' eyes, all, all behind me thrust,
Involved in yon dark hangings at my back,
And this brave landscape with the golden stars,
The gentle breeze, the bushes, thus before me.

(*With growing agitation.*)

The evening ne'er must come, when I should see
All this with eyes like these, to say to me:
Here lies a road that shimmers in the moonlight:

Before the gentle breeze the next light cloudlet
Impels to meet the moon, a man could run
That road unto its end, between the hedges,
Then comes a cross-road, now a planted field,
And then the shadow of the standing corn,
At last a garden! There his hand would touch
At once a curtain, back of which is all:
All kissing, laughing, all the happiness
This world can give promiscuously flung
About like balls of golden wool, such bliss
That but a drop of it on parchéd lips
Suffices to be lighter than a flame,
To see no more of difficulty, nor
To understand what men call ugliness!

(*Almost shrieking.*)

The evening ne'er must come, that with a thousand
Unfettered tongues should cry to me: why not?
Why hast thou never run in dark of night
That road? Thy feet were young, thy breath sufficient:
Why hast thou saved it, that thou mightst have plenty
To weep a thousand nights upon thy pillow?

[*She turns her back to the window, clutches the table, collapses and falls to her knees, and remains thus, her face pressed to the table, her body shaken with weeping. A long pause.*]

[ERCHANT. And if the first door I should open wide,
The only locked one on this road of love?

[*He opens the small doorway leading into the garden on the right; the moonlight enters.*]

OBEIDE (*still kneeling by the table*).
Art thou so cruel as, in this first hour,
To make a silly pastime of my weeping?

Art thou so fain to put thy scorn upon me?
Art thou so proud of holding me securely?

MERCHANT (*with the utmost self-control*).
How much I could have wished that thou hadst learned
To know me otherwise, but now there is
No time for that.
Thy father, if 'tis this which so constrains thee,
Thy father owes me nothing now, indeed
Within some days agreements have been made
Between us twain, from which some little profit
And so, I hope, a much belated gleam
Of joyousness may come.
[*She has crept closer to him on her knees, listening.*]
So then thou mightest—
Thou mayst, I mean to say, if it was this
That lamed thee most, if in this—*alien* dwelling
Again thou feel the will to live, which thou
Hadst lost, if, as from heavy sleep aroused,
Yet not awake, thou feel it is this portal
That leads thee out to pulsing, waking life—
Then in the name of God and of the stars
I give thee leave to go where'er thou wilt.

SOBEIDE (*still on her knees*). What!

MERCHANT. I do no more regard thee as my wife
Than any other maid who, for protection
From tempest or from robbers by the wayside,
Had entered for a space into my house,
And I renounce herewith my claim upon thee,
Just as I have no valid right to any,
Whom such a chance might cast beneath my roof.

SOBEIDE. What sayest thou?

MERCHANT. I say that thou art free
To pass out through this door, and where thou wilt.
Free as the wind, the butterfly, the water.

SOBEIDE (*half standing*).
To go?
MERCHANT. To go.
SOBEIDE. Where'er I will?
MERCHANT. Where'er
Thou wilt, and at what time thou wilt.
SOBEIDE (*still half dazed, now at the door*). Now? Here?
MERCHANT. Or now, or later. Here, or otherwhere.
SOBEIDE (*doubtfully*).
But to my parents only?
MERCHANT (*in a more decided tone*).
Where thou wilt.
SOBEIDE (*laughing and weeping at once*).
This dost thou then? O never in a dream
I ventured such a thought, in maddest dreams
I ne'er had crept to thee upon my knees
[*She falls on her knees before him.*]
With this request, lest I should see thy laughter
Upon such madness . . . yet thou doest it,
Thou doest it! O thou! Thou good, good man!
[*He raises her gently, she stands bewildered.*]
MERCHANT (*turns away*).
When wilt thou go?
SOBEIDE. This very instant, now!
O be not angry, think not ill of me!
Consider: can I tarry in thy house,
A stranger's house this night? Must I not go
At once to him, since I belong to him?
How may his property this night inhabit
An alien house, as it were masterless?
MERCHANT (*bitterly*).
Already his?
SOBEIDE. Why sir, a proper woman
Is never masterless: for from her father
Her husband takes her, she belongs to him,
Be he alive or resting in the earth.
Her next and latest master—that is Death.

MERCHANT. Then wilt thou not, at least till break of day,
Return to rest at home?

SOBEIDE. No, no, my friend.
All that is past. My road, once and for all,
Is not the common one, this hour divides
Me altogether from all maiden ways.
So let me walk it to its very end
In this one night, that in a later day
All this be like a dream, nor I have need
To feel ashamed.

MERCHANT. Then go!

SOBEIDE. I give thee pain?
[MERCHANT *turns away.*]
Permit a single draught from yonder goblet.

MERCHANT. It was my mother's, take it to thyself.

SOBEIDE. I cannot, Lord. But let me drink from it.
[*Drinks.*]

MERCHANT. Drain this, and never mayst thou need in life
To quench thy thirst with wine from any goblet
Less pure than that.

SOBEIDE. Farewell.

MERCHANT. Farewell.
[*She is already on the threshold.*]
Hast thou no fear? Thou never yet hast walked
Alone. We dwell without the city wall.

SOBEIDE. Dear friend, I feel above all weakling fear,
And light my foot, as never in the daytime.
[*Exit.*]

MERCHANT (*after following her long with his eyes, with a gesture of pain*).
As if some plant were drawing quiet rootlets
From out my heart, to take wing after her,
And air were entering all the empty sockets!
[*He steps away from the window.*]
Does she not really seem to me less fair,
So hasty, so desirous to run thither,
Where scarce she knows if any wait her coming!

No: 'tis her youth that I must see aright;
This is a part of all things beautiful,
And all this haste becomes this creature just
As mute aspects become the fairest flowers.
[*Pause.*]
I think what I have done is of a part
With my conception of the world's great movement.
I will not have one set of lofty thoughts
When I behold high up the circling stars,
And others when a young girl stands before me.
What *there* is truth, must be so here as well,
And I must say, if yonder wedded child
Cannot endure to harbor in her spirit
Two things, of which the one belies the other,
Am I prepared to make my acts deny
What I have learned through groping premonition
And reason from that monstrous principle
That towers upon the earth and strikes the stars?
I call it Life, that monstrous thing, this too
Is life — and who might venture to divide them?
And what is ripeness, if not recognizing
That men and stars have but one law to guide them?
And so herein I see the hand of fate,
That bids me live as lonely as before,
And heirless — when I speak the last good-by —
And with no loving hand in mine, to die.

Scene II

A wainscoted room in Shalnassar's *house. An ascending stairway, narrow and steep, in the right background; a descending one at the left. A gallery of open woodwork with openings, inner balconies, runs about the entire stage. Unshaded hanging lamps. Curtained doorways to the left and right. Against the left wall a low bench, farther to the rear a table and seats.*

Old SHALNASSAR *sits on the bench near the left doorway, wrapped in a cloak. Before him stands a young man, the impoverished merchant.*

SHALNASS. Were I as rich as you regard me — truly
I am not so, quite far from that, my friend —
I could not even then grant this postponement,
Nay, really, friend, and solely for your sake:
For too indulgent creditors, by Heaven,
Are debtors' ruin.

DEBTOR. Hear me now, Shalnassar!

SHALNASS. No more. I can hear nothing. Yea, my deafness
But grows apace with all your talking. Go!
Go home, I say: think how you may retrench.
I know your house, 'tis overrun with vermin,
I mean the servants. Curtail the expenses
Your wife has caused: they are most unbecoming
For your position. What? I am not here
To give you counsel. Home with you, I tell you.

DEBTOR. I wanted to, my heart detains me here,
This heart that swells with pain. Go home? To me
The very door of my own house is hateful.
I cannot enter, but some creditor
Would block my way.

SHALNASS. Well, what a fool you were.
Go home and join your lovely wife, be off!
Go home! Bring offspring into life. Then starve!
[*He claps his hands. The Armenian slave comes up the stairs.* SHALNASSAR *whispers with him, without heeding the other.*]

DEBTOR. Not fifty florins have I in the world.
You spoke of servants? Aye, one withered crone
To carry water, that is all. And she
How long? No wretch abandoned, fed with alms,
Feels misery like mine: for I have known
The sweets of wealth. Through every night I slept,

Contentment round my head, and sweet was morning.
But hush! she loves me still, and so my failure
Is bright and golden. O, she is my wife!

SHALNASS. I beg you, go, the lamps will have to burn
So long as you are standing round. Go with him.
Here are the keys.

DEBTOR (*overcoming his fear*). A word, good Shalnassar!
I had not wished to beg you for reprieve.

SHALNASS. What? Does my deafness cause me some illusion?

DEBTOR. No, really.

SHALNASS. But?

DEBTOR. But for another loan.

SHALNASS (*furious*).
What do you want?

DEBTOR. Not what I want, but must.
Thou never hast beheld her, thou must see her!
My heavy heart gives o'er its sullen beating
And leaps with joy, whene'er I look upon her.
(*With growing agitation.*)
All this must yet be altered. Her fair limbs
Are for the cult of tenderness created,
Not for the savage claws of desperation.
She cannot go a-begging, with such hair.
Her mouth is proud as it is sweet. O, fate
Is trying to outwit me—but I scorn it—
If thou couldst see her, old man—

SHALNASS. I *will* see her!
Tell her the man of years, upon whose gold
Her husband young so much depends—now mark:
The good old man, say, the decrepit graybeard—
Desired to see her. Tell her men of years
Are childish, why should this one not be so?
But still a call is little. Tell her this:

It is almost a grave that she would visit,
A grave just barely breathing. Will you do't?

DEBTOR. I've heard it said that you adore your gold
Like something sacred, and that next to that
You love the countenance of anguished men,
And looks that mirror forth the spirit's pain.
But you are old, have sons, and so I think
These evil sayings false. And therefore I
Will tell her this, and if perchance she asks me,
"What thinkest thou?" then I will say, "My dearest,
Peculiar, but not bad."—Farewell, but pray you,
When your desire is granted, let not mine,
Shalnassar, wait long for its due fulfilment.

[*The* DEBTOR *and the Armenian slave exeunt down the stairs.*]

SHALNASS. (*alone, rises, stretches, seems much taller now*).
A honeyed fool is that, a sweet-voiced babbler,
"Hear, aged man!"—"I beg you, aged man!"
I've heard men say his wife is beautiful,
And has such fiery color in her hair
That fingers tumbling it feel heat and billows
At once. If she comes not, then she shall learn
To sleep on naked straw. . . .
. . . 'Twere time to sleep.
They say that convalescents need much sleep.
But if I must be deaf, then I'll be deaf
To wisdom such as this. Sleep is naught other
Than early death. I would enjoy my nights
Together with the days still left to me.
I will be generous, whenas I please:
To Gülistane I will give more this evening
Than she could dream. And this shall be my pretext
To have her change her room and take a chamber
Both larger and near mine. If she will do't,

Her bath shall be the juice of violets, roses,
Or pinks, and gold and amber she shall quaff,
Until the roof-beams reel in dizzy madness.

[*He claps his hands, a slave comes. Exit left, followed by slave.* GÜLISTANE *comes up the stairs, an old slave-woman behind her.* GANEM *bends forward from a niche above, spies* GÜLISTANE *and comes down the stairs.*]

NEM (*takes her by the hand*).
My dream, whence comest thou? So long I lay
To wait for thee.

[*The old slave-woman mounts the stairs.*]

LISTANE. I? From my bath I come
And go now to my chamber.

NEM. How thou shinest
From bathing.

LISTANE. It was flowing, glowing silver
Of moonlight.

NEM. Were I one of yonder trees,
I would cast off my foliage with a quiver,
And leap to thee! O were I master here!

LISTANE. Aye, if thou wert! Thy father is quite well.
He bade me dine alone with him this evening.

NEM. Accursèd skill, that roused this blood again,
Which was already half coagulated.
I saw him speaking with thee just this morning.
What was it?

LISTANE. I have told thee.

NEM. Speak, was that all? Thou liest, there was more!

LISTANE. He asked me—

NEM. What? But hush, the walls have ears.
[*She whispers.*]
Beloved!
While thou art speaking, ripes in me a plan,
Most wonderful, note well, and based on this:
He now is but the shadow of himself,

And though he still stands threatening there, his feet
Are clay. His wrath is thunder without lightning.
And — mark me well — all this his lustfulness
Is naught but senile braggadocio.

GÜLISTANE. Well,
What dost thou base on this?

GANEM. The greatest hope.
[*He whispers.*]

GÜLISTANE. But such a poison —
Suppose there should be one of such a nature,
To end the life, but leave the corpse unmarred —
This poison none will sell thee.

GANEM. Aye, no man,
A woman will —

GÜLISTANE. For what reward?

GANEM. For this,
That, thinking I am wed, she also thinks
To call me husband — after.

GÜLISTANE. Who'll believe it? . . .

GANEM. There long has been a woman who believes it.

GÜLISTANE. Thou liest: saidst thou not the plan was new?
And now thou sayst there long has been a woman.

GANEM. There has: I meshed her in this web of lies
Before I saw the goal. Today 'tis clear.

GÜLISTANE. Who is't?

GANEM. The limping daughter of a poor
Old pastrycook, who lives in the last alley
Down in the sailors' quarter.

GÜLISTANE. And her name?

GANEM. What's in a name? Her eyes, with doglike fear,
Clung to me when I passed, one of those faces
That lure me, since so greedily they drink
In lies, and weave out of themselves such fancies.
And so I oft would stand and talk to her.

LAKE IN THE GRUNEWALD

From the Painting by Walter Leistikow

GÜLISTANE. And who gives her the poison?
GANEM. Why, her father,
By keeping it where she can steal it from him.
GÜLISTANE. What? He a pastry-maker?
GANEM. But quite skilful,
And very poor—and yet not to be purchased
By us at any price: he is of those
Who secretly reject our holy books,
And eat no food on which our shadow falls.
I'll visit her, while thou art eating dinner
With him.
GÜLISTANE. So each will have his part to play.
GANEM. But mine shall end all further repetition
Of thine. Soon I return. Make some excuse
To leave him. If I found thee with him—
GÜLISTANE (*puts her hand over his mouth*). Hush!
GANEM (*overcome*).
How cool thy fingers are, and yet, how burns
Thy blood within them, sorceress! Thou holdest
Me captive in the deepest cell, and feedest
Me e'er at midnight with thy kennels' leavings;
Thou scourgest me, and in the dust I grovel.
GÜLISTANE. E'en so, and thou?
GANEM (*crushed by her look*). And I?
[*Looks down at his feet.*]
My name is Ganem,
Ganem, the slave of love.
[*He sinks before her, clasping her feet.*]
GÜLISTANE. Go quickly, go!
I hear thy father, go! I bid thee go!
I will not have them find us here together.
GANEM. I have a silly smile, quite meaningless,
'Twould serve me well to look him in the face.
[GÜLISTANE *goes up the stairs. The Armenian slave comes from below.* GANEM *turns to go out on the right.*]
SLAVE. Was Gülistane with thee?

GANEM. [*Shrugs his shoulders.*]
SLAVE. But thou wast speaking.
GANEM. Aye, with my hound.
SLAVE. Then she is doubtless here.

[*He goes up the stairs. The stage remains empty awhile, then* SHALNASSAR *enters from the left with three slaves bearing vessels and ornaments. He has everything set down by the left wall, where there is a table with low seats.*]

SHALNASS. Put this down here, this here. Now ye may serve.

[*He goes to the lowest step of the stairway.*]

Ah, convalescents, so they say, should seek
The sun. Well, here I stand,

[GÜLISTANE *comes down and he leads her to the gifts.*]

And know no more
Of sickness, than that amber is its work,
And pearls, when it resides in trees or oysters.
My word, they both are here. And here are birds,
Quite lifelike, woven into gleaming silk,
If it be worth thy while to look at them.

GÜLISTANE. This is too much.
SHALNASS. Aye, for a pigeon-house,
But scarcely for a chamber large enough
To hold such rose-perfume as yonder vases
Exhale, and yet not fill the air to stifling.
GÜLISTANE. O see, what wondrous vases!
SHALNASS. This is onyx,
And that one Chrysophrase, beneath thy notice.
Impenetrable they are called, but odors
Can pass their walls as they were rotten wood.
GÜLISTANE. How thank thee?

[SHALNASSAR *does not understand.*]

GÜLISTANE. How, I say, am I to thank thee?

SHALNASS. By squandering all this:
This desk of sandal-wood and inlaid pearl
Use stead of withered twigs on chilly nights
To warm thy bath: watch how the flames will sparkle,
With sweet perfume!
[*A dog is heard to give tongue, then several.*]

GÜLISTANE. What sheer and fragile lace! [*Lifts it up.*]

SHALNASS. Dead, lifeless stuff. I'll bring to thee a dwarf,
Hath twenty tongues of beasts and men within him.
Instead of apes and parrots I will give thee
Most curious men, abortions of the trees
That marry with the air. They sing by night.

GÜLISTANE. Thou shalt have kisses.
[*The baying of the dogs grows stronger, seems nearer.*]

SHALNASS. Say, do young lovers
Give better gifts?

GÜLISTANE. What wretched blunderers
In this great art, but what a master thou!
[*The Armenian slave comes, plucks* SHALNASSAR *by the sleeve, and whispers.*]

SHALNASS. A maiden sayst thou? Doubtless 'tis a woman,
But young? I do not understand.

GÜLISTANE. What maiden meanest thou, Beloved?

SHALNASS. None, none. I merely bade this slave "remain,"
And thou misheardest. (*To the slave.*) Hither come, speak softly.

SLAVE. She is half dead with fear, for some highwayman
Pursued her here, and then the dogs attacked her
And pulled her down. All out of breath she asked me,
"Is this Shalnassar's house, the carpet-dealer?"

SHALNASS. It is the wife of that sweet fool. He sent her.
Be still. (*He goes to* GÜLISTANE, *who is just putting a string of pearls about her throat.*)

O lovely! they're not worth their place.
[*He goes back to the slave.*]

SLAVE. She also speaks of Ganem.

SHALNASS. Of my son?
All one. Say, is she fair?

SLAVE. I thought so.

SHALNASS. What?

SLAVE. But all deformed with fear.

GÜLISTANE. Some business?

SHALNASS. (*to her*). None,
But serving thee.
[*He puts out his hand to close the clasp at her neck, but fails.*]

GÜLISTANE. Forbear!

SHALNASS. (*puts his hand to his eye*). A little vein
Burst in my eye. I must behold thee dance,
To make the blood recede.

GÜLISTANE. A strange idea.

SHALNASS. Come, for my sake.

GÜLISTANE. Why, then I must put up
My hair.

SHALNASS. Then put it up. I cannot live
While thou delayest.
[GÜLISTANE *goes up the stairs.*]
(*To the slave.*)
Lead her here to me.
Say only this: the one she seeks awaits her.
Mark that: the one she seeks; no more.
[*He walks up and down; exit slave.*]
No being is so simple; no, I cannot
Believe there are such fools. Highwaymen, bosh!
He sent her here, and all that contradicts it
Is simply lies.
I little thought that she would come tonight,
But gold draws all this out of nothingness.
I'll keep her if she pleases me: her husband
Shall never see her face again. With fetters
Of linkèd gold I'll deck her pretty ankles.

I'll keep them both and make them both so tame
That they will swing like parrots in one ring.
[*The slave leads* SOBEIDE *up the stairs. She is agitated, her eyes staring, her hair disheveled, the strings of pearls torn off. She no longer wears her veil.*]

SHALNASS. O that my son might die for very wrath!
Well, well, and how she trembles and dissembles. [*He motions the slave out.*]

SOBEIDE (*looks at him fearfully*).
Art thou Shalnassar?

SHALNASS. Yes. And has thy husband—

SOBEIDE. My husband? Knowst thou that? Why, did I not
Just now . . . was it not just this very night? . . .
What? . . . or dost thou surmise?

SHALNASS. Coquettish chatter
May do for youthful apes. But I am old,
And know the power that I have over you.

SOBEIDE. That power thou hast, but thou wilt not employ it
To do me hurt.

SHALNASS. No, by the eternal light!
But I am not a maker of sweet sayings,
Nor fond of talk.
Deliberate flattery I put behind me:
The mouth that sucks the sweetness of the fruit
Is mute. And this is chiefly autumn's trade.
Yea, though the spring may breathe a sweeter odor,
Old autumn laughs at him.—Nay, look not so
Upon my hand. Because 'tis full of veins,
Rank weeds, in which the juice of life dries up.—
O, it will seize thee yet and it can hold thee!
What, pain so soon? I'll soothe it with a string
Of pearls, come, come!
[*Tries to draw her away.*]

SOBEIDE (*frees herself*).

Have mercy, thou, my poor enfeebled brain
Is all deranged. Is it to me thou speakest?
Speak, thou art surely drunken or wouldst mock me.
Knowst thou then who I am? Oh yes, thou saidst
My husband. Yes, this was my wedding-day!
Knowst thou it? When I stood with him alone,
My husband, then it all came over me;
I wept aloud, and when he asked me, then
I lifted up my voice against him, spoke
To him of Ganem, of thy son, and told him
The whole. I'll tell thee later how it was.
Just now I know not. Only this: the door
He opened for me, kindly, not in anger,
And said to me I was no more his wife,
And I might go where'er I would.—Then go
And fetch me Ganem! Fetch him here for me!

SHALNASS. (*angrily grasps his beard*).

Accursed deception! Speak, what devil let thee in?

SOBEIDE. Dear sir, I am the only child of Bachtjar,
The jeweler.

SHALNASS. (*claps his hands, the slave comes*).

Call Ganem.

SOBEIDE (*involuntarily*). Call him hither.

SHALNASS. (*to the slave*).

Bring up the dinner. Is the dwarf prepared?

SLAVE. They're feeding him; for till his hunger's gone,
He is too vicious.

SHALNASS. Good, I'll go and see it.
[*Exit with the slave to the left.*]

SOBEIDE (*alone*).

Now I am here. Does fortune thus begin?
Yes, this has had to come, and all these colors
I know because I dreamed them, mingled thus.

We drink from goblets which a little child,
With eyes that sparkle as through garlands gay,
Holds out — but from the branches of a tree-top
Black drops drip down into the goblet's bowl
And mingle death and night with what we drink.

[*She sits down on the bench.*]

With whatsoe'er we do some night is mingled,
And e'en our eye has something of its blackness.
The glitter in the fabrics of our looms
Is but the woof, the pattern, its true warp
Is night.
Aye, death is everywhere; and with our glances
And with our words we cover him from sight,
And like the children, when in merry playing
They hide some toy, so we forget forthwith
That we are hiding death from our own glances.
Oh, if *we* e'er have children, they must keep
From knowing this for many, many years.
Too soon I learned it. And the cruel pictures
Are evermore in me: they perch within me
Like turtle-doves in copses and come swarming
Upon the least alarm.

[*She looks up.*]

But now Ganem will come. Oh, if my heart
Would cease from holding all my blood compressed.
I'm wearied unto death. Oh, I could sleep.

[*With forced liveliness.*]

Ganem will come, and then all will be well!

[*She breathes the scent of oil of roses and becomes aware of the precious objects.*]

How all this is perfumed, and how it sparkles!

[*With alarmed astonishment.*]

And there! Woe's me, this is the house of wealth,
Deluded, foolish eyes, look here and here!

[*She rouses her memory feverishly.*]

And that old man was fain with strings of pearls
To bind my arms and hands—why, they are rich!
And "poor" was every second word he uttered.
He lied then, lied not once but many times!
I saw him smiling when he lied, I feel it,
It chokes me here!

[*She tries to calm herself.*]

Oh, if he lied—but there are certain things
That can constrain a spirit. And his father
I have done much for my old father's sake—
His father this? That chokes me more than ever.
Inglorious heart, he comes, and something, something
Will be revealed, all this I then shall grasp,
I then shall grasp—

[*She hears steps, looks about her wildly, then cries in fear.*]

Come, leave me not alone!

[GÜLISTANE *and an old serving-woman come down the stairs and go to the presents by the table.*]

SOBEIDE (*starting*).

Ganem, is it not thou?

GÜLISTANE (*in an undertone*). Why, she is mad.

[*She lays one present after another on the servant's arms.*]

SOBEIDE (*standing at some distance from her*).

No, no, I am not mad. Oh, be not angry.
The dogs are after me! But first a man.
I'm almost dead with fear. He is my friend,
Will tell you who I am. Ye do not know
How terror can transform a human being.
I ask you, are not all of us in terror
Of even drunken men? This was a murd'rer.

I am not brave, but with a lie that sped
Into my wretched head I held him off
Awhile — then he came on, and I could feel
His hands. Take pity on me, be not angry!
Ye sit there at the table fair with candles,
And I disturb. But if ye are his friends,
Ask him to tell you all. And later on,
When we shall meet and ye shall know me better,
We both will laugh about it. But as yet
(*Shuddering.*)
I could not laugh at it.

GÜLISTANE (*turning to her*).
Who is thy friend, and who will tell us all?

SOBEIDE (*with innocent friendliness*).
Why, Ganem.

GÜLISTANE. Oh, what business hast thou here?

SOBEIDE (*steps closer, looks fixedly at her*).
What, art thou not the widow
Of Kamkar, the ship-captain?

GÜLISTANE. And thou the daughter
Of Bachtjar, the gem-dealer?
[*They regard each other attentively.*]

SOBEIDE. It is long since
We saw each other.

GÜLISTANE. What com'st thou here
To do?

SOBEIDE. Then thou liv'st here? — I come to question Ganem
(*Faltering.*)
About a matter — on which much depends —
Both for my father —

GÜLISTANE. Hast not seen him lately?
Ganem, I mean.

SOBEIDE. Nay, 'tis almost a year.
Since Kamkar died, thy husband, 'tis four years.

I know the day he died. How long hast thou
Lived here?

GÜLISTANE. They are my kin. What is't to thee,
How long? But then, what odds? Why then,
three years. [SOBEIDE *is silent.*]

GÜLISTANE (*to the slave*).
Look to't that nothing fall. Hast thou the
mats?

(*To* SOBEIDE.)

For it may be, if one were left to lie
And Ganem found it, he would take the notion
To bed his cheek on it, because my foot
Had trodden it, and then whate'er thou spokest,
He would be deaf to thine affair. Or if
He found the pin that's fallen from my hair
And breathing still its perfume: then his senses
Would fasten on that trinket, and he never
Would know thy presence.

(*To the slave.*)

Pick it up for me.
Come, bend thy back.

[*She pushes the slave.* SOBEIDE *bends quickly and holds out the pin to the slave.* GÜLISTANE *takes it out of her hand and thrusts with it at* SOBEIDE.]

SOBEIDE. Alas, why prickst thou me?

GÜLISTANE. That I may circumvent thee, little serpent.
Go, for thy face is such a silly void
That one can see what thou wouldst hide in it.
Go home again, I counsel thee.—Come thou
And carry all thou canst.

(*To* SOBEIDE.)

Mark thou my words:
What's mine I will preserve and keep from
thieves!

[*She goes up the stairs with the slave.*]

SOBEIDE (*alone*).

What's left for me? How can this turn to good,
That so begins? No, no, my destiny
Would try me. What should mean to him this woman?
This is not love, it is but lust, a thing
That men find needful to their lives. He comes,
(*In feverish haste.*)
And he will cast this from him with a word
And laugh at me. Arise, my recollections,
For now I need you or shall never need you!
Woe, woe, that I must call you in this hour!
Will not one loving glance return to me?
One unambiguous word? Ah, words and glances,
Deceitful woof of air. A heavy heart
Would cling to you, and ye are rent like cobwebs.
Away, fond recollection! My old life
Today is cast behind me, and I stand
Upon a sphere that rolls I know not whither.
(*With increasing agitation.*)
Ganem will come to me, and his first word
Will rend the noose that tightens on my throat.
He comes, will take me in his arms—all dripping
With fear and horror, stead of oils and perfumes,—
I'll say no word, I'll hang upon his neck
And drink the words he speaks. For his first word,
The very first will lull all fears to sleep . . .
He'll smile all doubt away . . . and put to flight . . .
But if he fail? . . . I will not think it, will not! [GANEM *comes up the stairs.*]

SOBEIDE (*cries out*).
Ganem!
[*She runs to him, feels his hair, his face, falls before him, presses her head against him, at once laughing and weeping convulsively.*]
I'm here, Oh take me, take me, hold me fast!
Be good to me, thou knowst not all as yet.
I cannot yet . . . How lookest thou upon me?
[*She stands up again, steps back, and looks at him in fearful suspense.*]
GANEM (*stands motionless before her.*)
Thou!
SOBEIDE (*in breathless haste*).
I belong to thee, am thine, my Ganem!
Ask me not now how this has come to pass:
This is the centre of a labyrinth,
But now we stand here. Wilt thou not behold me?
He gave me freedom, he himself, my husband . . .
Why does thy countenance show such a change?
GANEM. No cause. Come hither, they may overhear us . . .
SOBEIDE. I feel that there is something in me now
Displeases thee. Why dost thou keep it from me?
GANEM. What wouldst thou?
SOBEIDE. Nothing, if I may but please thee.
Ah, be indulgent. Tell me my shortcomings.
I will be so obedient. Was I bold?
Look thou, 'tis not my nature so; I feel
As if this night had gripped me with its fists
And flung me hither, aye, my spirit shudders
At all that I had power there to say,
And that I then had strength to walk this road.
Art sorry that I had it?

GANEM. Why this weeping?
SOBEIDE. Thou hast the power to change me so. I cannot
But laugh or weep, or blush or pale again
As thou wouldst have it.
[GANEM *kisses her.*]
SOBEIDE. When thou kissest me,
O look not thus! But no, I am thy slave.
Do as thou wilt. Here let me rest. I will
Be clay unto thy hands, and think no more.
And now thy brow is wrinkled?
GANEM. Aye, for soon
Thou must return. Thou smilest?
SOBEIDE. Should I not?
I know thou wouldst but try me.
GANEM. No, in earnest,
Thou art in error. Thinkest thou perhaps
That I can keep thee here? Say, has thy husband
Gone over land, that thou art not afraid?
SOBEIDE. I beg thee cease, I cannot laugh just now.
GANEM. No, seriously, when shall I come to thee?
SOBEIDE. To me, what for? Thou seest, I am here:
Look, here before thy feet I sit me down;
I have no other home except the straw
Beside thy hound, if thou wilt not provide
A bed for me; and none will come to fetch me.
[*He raises her, then claps his hands delightedly.*]
GANEM. O splendid! How thou playst a seeming part
When opportunity demands. And it becomes thee,
Oh, most superbly! We'll draw profit from it.
There'll be no lack of further free occasion,
To yield ourselves to pleasure undismayed—
When shall I come to thee?

SOBEIDE (*stepping back*). Oh, I am raving!
My head's to blame, for that I hear thee speaking
Quite other words than those thou really utter'st.
O Ganem, help me! Have thou patience with me,
What day is this today?

GANEM. Why ask that now?

SOBEIDE. 'Twill not be always so, 'tis but from fear,
And then because I've had to feel too much
In this one fleeting night; that has confused me.
This was my wedding-day: then when alone
With him, my husband, I did weep and said
It was because of thee. He oped the door
And let me out.—

GANEM. He has the epilepsy,
I'll wager, sought fresh air. Thou art too foolish!
Let me undo thy hair and kiss thy neck.
But then go quickly home: what happens later
Shall be much better than this first beginning.
[*He tries to draw her to him.*]

SOBEIDE (*frees herself, steps back*).
Ganem, he oped the door for me, and said
I was no more his wife, and I might go
Where'er I would . . . My father free of debt
. . . And he would let me go where'er I would . . .
To thee, to thee! [*She bursts into sobs.*]
I ran, there was the man who took away
My pearls and would have slain me—
And then the dogs—
(*With the pitiable expression of one forsaken.*)
And now I'm here with thee!

GANEM (*inattentively, listening intently up stage*).
I think I hear some music, hear'st it thou?—
'Tis from below.

EIDE. Thy face and something else,
O Ganem, fill me with a mighty fear—
Hark not to that, hear me! hear me, I beg thee!
Hear me, that here beneath thy glance am lying
With open soul, whose ebb and flow of blood
Proceeds but from the changes of thy mien.
Thou once didst love me—that, I think, is past—
For what came then, I only am to blame:
Thy brightness waxed within my gloomy soul
Like moons in fog—

[GANEM *listens as before.* SOBEIDE *with growing wildness.*]

Suppose thou loved me not:
Why didst thou lie? If I was aught to thee,
Why hast thou lied to me? O speak to me—
Am I not worth an answer?

[*Weird music and voices are heard outside.*]

EM. Yes, by heaven,
It is the old man's voice and Gülistane's!

[*Down the stairs come a fluting dwarf and an effeminate-looking slave playing a lute, preceded by others with lights; then* SHALNASSAR, *leaning on* GÜLISTANE; *finally a eunuch with a whip stuck in his belt.* GÜLISTANE *frees herself and comes forward, seeming to search the floor for something; the others come forward also. The music ceases.*]

ISTANE (*over her shoulder, to* SHALNASSAR).
I miss a tiny jar, of swarthy onyx
And filled with ointment. Art thou ling'ring still,
Thou Bachtjar's daughter? Bend thy lazy back
And try to find it.

[SOBEIDE *is silent, looking at* GANEM.]

SHALNASS. Let it be and come!
I'll give thee hundreds more.

GÜLISTANE. It was a secret,
The ointment in it.

GANEM (*close to* GÜLISTANE). What means this procession?

SHALNASS. Come on, why not? The aged cannot wait.
And ye, advance! Bear lights and make an uproar!
Be drunken: what has night to do with sleep!
Advance up to the door, then stay behind!
[*The slaves form in order again.*]

GANEM (*furious*).
Door, door? What door?

SHALNASS. (*to* GÜLISTANE, *who leans against him*).
Say, shall I give an answer?
If so, I'll do't to flatter thee. If not,
'Twill be to show thee that my happiness
Requireth not old envy's flattery.

GANEM (*to* GÜLISTANE).
Say no, say he is lying!

GÜLISTANE. Go, good Ganem,
And let us pass. Thy father is recovered,
And we are glad of it. Why stand so gloomy?
One must be merry with the living, eh,
While yet they live? [*She looks into his eyes.*]

GANEM (*snatches the whip from the eunuch*).
Old woman, for what purpose is this whip?
Now flee and scatter, crippled, halting folly!
[*He strikes at the musicians and the lights, then casts down the whip.*]
Out, shameful lights, and thou, to bed with thee,
Puffed, swollen body; and ye bursting veins,
Ye reddened eyes, and thou putrescent mouth,
Off to a solitary bed, and night,
Dark, noiseless night instead of brazen torches
And blaring horns!
[*He motions the old man out.*]

SHALNASS. (*bends with an effort to take the whip*).
Mine is the whip, not thine!

SOBEIDE (*cries out*).
His father! Son and father for one woman!

GÜLISTANE (*wrests the whip out of* SHALNASSAR'S *hand*).
Go thou to bed thyself, hot-headed Ganem,
And leave together them that would be joined.
Rebuke thy father not. An older man
Can pass a sounder judgment, is more faithful
Than wanton youth. Hast thou not company?
Old Bachtjar's daughter stands there in the darkness,
And often I've been told that she is fair.
I know right well, thou wast in love with her.
So then good night. [*They all turn to go.*]

GANEM (*wildly*). Go not with him!

GÜLISTANE (*speaking backward over her shoulder*). I go
Where'er my heart commands.

GANEM (*beseechingly*). Go not with him!

GÜLISTANE. Oh, let us through: there will be other days.

GANEM (*lying before her on the stairs*).
Go not with him!

GÜLISTANE (*turning around*).
Thou daughter of old Bachtjar,
Keep him, I say, I want him not, I trample
Upon his fingers with my feet! Seest thou?

SOBEIDE (*as if demented*).
Aye, aye, now let us dance a merry round!
Take thou my hand and Ganem's; I Shalnassar's.
Our hair we'll loosen, and that one of us
That has the longer hair shall have the young one
Tonight—tomorrow just the other way!
King Baseness sits enthroned! And from our faces
Lies drip like poison from the salamander!

I claim my share in your high revelry.
(*To* GANEM, *who angrily watches them mount the stairs.*)
Go up and steal her from thy father's bed
And choke him sleeping: drunken men are helpless!
I see how fain thou art to lie with her.
When thou are sated or wouldst have a change,
Then come to me, but softly we will tread,
For heavy sleep comes not to my old husband,
Such as they have, who can give ear to this,
And then sleep through it!
[*She casts herself on the floor.*]
But with grievous howling
I will arouse this house to shame and wrath
And lamentation . . .
(*She lies groaning.*)
. . . I have loved thee so,
And so thou tramplest on me!
[*An old slave appears in the background, putting out the lights; he picks up a fallen fruit and eats it.*]

GANEM (*claps his hands in sudden anger*).
Come, take her out! Here is a shrieking woman,
I scarcely know her, says she weeps for me.
Her father fain would wed her to the merchant,
The wealthy one, but she perverts the whole,
And says her husband is a similar pander,
But he's no more than fool, for aught I see.
(*He steps close to her, mockingly sympathetic.*)
O ye, too credulous by far. But then,
Your nature's more to blame than skill of ours.
No, get thee up. I will no more torment thee.

SOBEIDE (*raises herself up. Her voice is hard*).
Then naught was true, and back of all is naught.
From this I cannot cleanse myself again:
What came into my soul today, remaineth.

Another might dispel it: I'm too weary.
(*Stands up.*)
Away! I know my course, but now away
From here!
[*The old slave has gone slowly down the stairs.*]

GANEM. I will not hold thee. Yet the road—
How wilt thou find it? Still, thou foundst it once.

SOBEIDE. The road, the self-same road!
(*She shudders.*) Yon aged man
Shall go with me. I have no fear, but still
I would not be alone: until the dawn—
[GANEM *goes up stage to fetch the slave.*]

SOBEIDE. Meseems I wear a robe to which the pest
And horrid traces of wild drunkenness
And wilder nights are clinging, and I cannot
Put off the robe, but all my flesh goes too.
Now I must die, and all will then be well.
But speedily, before this shadow-thinking
About my father gathers blood again:
Else 'twill grow stronger, drag me back to life,
And I must travel onward in this body.

GANEM (*slowly leads the old slave forward*).
Give heed. This is rich Chorab's wife, the merchant.
Hast understood?

OLD SLAVE (*nods*). The rich one.

GANEM. Aye, thou shalt
Escort her.

OLD SLAVE. What?

GANEM. I say, thou art to lead her
Back to her house.
(OLD SLAVE *nods.*)

SOBEIDE. Just to the garden wall.
From there I only know how I must go.
Will he do that? I thank thee. That is good,
Most good. Come, aged man, I go with thee.

GANEM. Go out this door, the old man knows the path.
SOBEIDE. He knows it, that is good, most good. We go.
[*They go out through the door at the right.* GANEM *turns to mount the stairs.*]

SCENE III

The garden of the rich merchant. The high wall runs from the right foreground backward toward the left. Steps lead to a small latticed gate in the wall. To the left a winding path is lost among the trees. It is early morning. The shrubs are laden with blossoms, and the meadows are full of flowers. In the foreground the gardener and his wife are engaged in taking delicate blooming shrubs from an open barrow and setting them in prepared holes.

GARDENER. The rest are coming now. But no, that is
A single man . . . The master!
WIFE. What? He's up
Ere dawn, and yesterday his wedding-day?
Alone he walks the garden—that's no man
Like other men.
GARDENER. Be still, he's coming hither.
MERCHANT (*walks up slowly from the left*).
The hour of morn, before the sun is up,
When all the branches in the lifeless light
Hang dead and dull, is terrible. I feel
As if I saw the whole world in a frightful
And vacant glass, as dreary as my mind's eye.
O would all flowers might wither! Would my garden
Were poisonous morass, filled to the full
With rotted corpses of these blooming trees,
And my corpse in their midst.
[*He is pulling to pieces a blossoming twig, stops short and drops it.*]
Ah, what a fool!
A gray-haired fool, as old as melancholy,
Ridiculous as old! I'll sit me down
And bind up wreaths and weep into the water.
[*He walks on a few paces, lifts his hand as if involuntarily to his heart.*]

A BRANDENBURG LAKE

From the Painting by Walter Leistikow

O how like glass this is, and how the finger
With which fate raps upon it, like to iron!
Years form no rings on men as on the trees,
Nor fashion breast-plates to protect the heart.

[*Again he walks a few paces, and so comes upon the gardener, who takes off his straw hat; he starts up out of his revery, and looks inquiringly at the gardener.*]

RDENER. Thy servant Sheriar, lord; third gardener I.

RCHANT. What? Sheriar, Oh yes. And this thy wife?

RDENER. Aye, lord.

RCHANT. But she is younger far than thou,
And once thou cam'st to me to make complaint
That she and some young lad,—I can't recall . . .

RDENER. It was the donkey-driver.

RCHANT. So I chased
Him from my service, and she ran away.

RDENER (*bowing low*).
Thou know'st the sacred courses of the stars,
Yet thou rememberest the worm as well,
That in the dust once crawled beside thy feet.
'Tis so, my lord. But she returned to me,
And lives with me thenceforth.

RCHANT. And lives with thee?
The fellow beat her, doubtless! Thou dost not.

[*He turns away, his tone becomes bitter.*]

Why, let us seat ourselves here in the grass,
And each will tell his story to the other.
He lives with her thenceforth. Why yes, he has her!
Possession is the end of all! And folly
It were to scorn the common, when our life
Is made up of the common through and through.

[*Exit to the right with vigorous strides.*]

FE (*to the gardener*).
What did he say to thee?

GARDENER. Oh, nothing, nothing.

[SOBEIDE *and the camel-driver appear at the latticed gate.*]

WIFE. I'll tell thee something.

[*Draws near him.*]

Look, look there!

The bride! That is our master's bride!

And see how pale and overwrought.

GARDENER. Pay heed

To thine affairs.

WIFE. Look there, she has no veil,

And see who's with her. Look. Why, that is none

Of master's servants, is it?

GARDENER. I don't know.

[SOBEIDE *puts her arm through the lattice, seeking the lock.*]

WIFE. She wants to enter. Hast thou not the key?

GARDENER (*looking up*).

Aye, that I have, and since she is the mistress,

She must be served before she opes her lips.

[*He goes to the gate and unlocks it.* SOBEIDE *enters, the old slave behind her. The gardener locks the gate.* SOBEIDE *walks forward with absent look, the old slave following. The gardener walks past her, takes off his straw hat, and is about to return to his work. The wife stands a few paces to the rear, parts the bushes curiously.*]

SOBEIDE. Pray tell me, is the pond not here at hand,

The big one, with the willows on its banks?

GARDENER (*pointing to the right*).

Down there it lies, my mistress, thou canst see it.

But shall I guide thee?

SOBEIDE (*with a vehement gesture*). No, no, leave me, go!

[*She is about to go off toward the right; the old slave catches her dress and holds her back. She turns.* OLD SLAVE *holds out his hand like a beggar, but withdraws it at once in embarrassment.*]

SOBEIDE. What?

OLD SLAVE. Thou art at home, I'm going back again.

SOBEIDE. Oh yes, and I have robbed thee of thy sleep,
And give thee naught for it. And thou art old
And poor. But I have nothing, less than nothing!
As poor as I no beggar ever was.

[OLD SLAVE *screws up his face to laugh, holds out his hand again.*]

SOBEIDE (*looks helplessly about her, puts her hand to her hair, feels her pearl pendants, takes them off, and gives them to him*).
Take this, and this, and go!

OLD SLAVE (*shakes his head*). Oh no, not that!

SOBEIDE (*in a torment of haste*).
I give them gladly, only go, I beg of thee!

[*Starts away.*]

OLD SLAVE (*holds them in his hand*).
No, take them back. Give me some little coin.
I'm but a poor old fool. And they would come,
Shalnassar and the others, down upon me,
And take the pearls away. For I am old
And such a beggar. This would be my ruin.

SOBEIDE. I have naught else. But come again tonight
And bring them to the master here, my husband,
He'll give thee money for them.

OLD SLAVE. Thou'lt be here?

SOBEIDE. Ask but for him; go now and let me go.

[*Starts away.*]

OLD SLAVE (*holds her back*).

If he is kind, oh do thou pray for me,
That he may take me as a servant. He
Is rich and has so many. I am eager,
Need little sleep. But in Shalnassar's house
I always have such hunger in the evening.
I will —

SOBEIDE (*frees herself*).

Just come tonight and speak to him,
And say I wanted him to hear thy prayer.
Now go, I beg thee, for I have no time.

[*The old slave goes toward the gate, but stands still in the shrubbery. The gardener's wife has approached* SOBEIDE *from the left.* SOBEIDE *takes a few steps, then lets her vacant glance wander about, strikes her brow as if she had forgotten something. She suddenly stands still before the gardener's wife, looks at her absently, then inquires hastily*:]

The pond is there, I hear? The pond?

[*Points to the left.*]

WIFE. No, here.

[*Points to the right.*]

Here down this winding path. It turns right there.
Wouldst overtake my lord? He's walking slowly:
When thou art at the crossways, thou wilt see him.
Thou canst not miss him.

SOBEIDE (*more agitated*). I, the master?

WIFE. Why yes, dost thou not seek him?

SOBEIDE. Him? — Yes, yes,
Then — I'll — go — there.

[*Her glance roves anxiously, suddenly is fixed upon an invisible object at the left rear.*]

The tower, is it locked?

WIFE. The tower?

SOBEIDE. Yes, the steps to mount it.

WIFE. No,
The tower's never locked, by day or night.
Dost thou not know?

SOBEIDE. Oh yes.

WIFE. Wilt thou go up it?

SOBEIDE (*smiling painfully*).
No, no, not now. Perhaps another time.
(*Smiling with a friendly gesture.*)
Go, then. Go, go.
(*Alone.*)
The tower, the tower!
And quick. He comes from there. Soon 'tis too late.
[*She looks searchingly about her, walks slowly at first to the left, then runs through the shrubbery. The old slave, who has watched her attentively, slowly follows her.*]

GARDENER (*through with his work*).
Come here and help me, wife.

WIFE. Yes, right away.
[*They take up the barrow and carry it along toward the right.*]

MERCHANT (*enters from the right.*)
I loved her so! Ah, how this life of ours
Resembles dreams illusory. Today
I might have had her, here and always, I!
Possession is the whole: slow-growing power
That sifts down through the soul's unseen and hidden
Interstices, feeds thus the wondrous lamp
Within the spirit, and soon from such eyes
There bursts a mightier, sweeter gleam than moonlight.

Oh, I have loved her so! I fain would see her,
See her once more. My eye sees naught but death:
The flowers wilt before my eyes like candles,
When they begin to run: all, all is dying,
And all dies to no purpose, for she is
Not here—

[*The old camel-driver comes running from the left across the stage to the gardener and shows him something that seems to be happening rather high in the air to the left; the gardener calls his wife's attention to it, and all look.*]

MERCHANT (*becomes aware of this, follows the direction of their glances, grows deathly pale*).

God, God! Give answer! There, there, there!
The woman on the tower, bending forward,
Why does she so bend forward? Look, look there! [WIFE *shrieks and covers her face.*]

GARDENER (*runs to the left, looks, calls back*).

She lives and moves! Come, master, come this way.

[*The merchant runs out, the gardener's wife following. Immediately thereafter the merchant, the gardener, and his wife come carrying* SOBEIDE, *and lay her down in the grass. The gardener takes off his outer garment and lays it under her head. The old camel-driver stands at some distance.*]

MERCHANT (*kneeling*).

Thou breathest, thou wilt live for me, thou must!
Thou art too fair to die!

SOBEIDE (*opens her eyes*).

Forbear, I'm dying; hush, I know it well.
Dear husband, hush, I beg thee. Thee I had
Not thought to see again—
I need to crave thy pardon.

MERCHANT (*tenderly*). Thou!
SOBEIDE. Not this.
This had to be.—No, what took place last night:
I did to thee what should become no woman,
And all my destiny I grasped and treated
As I in dancing used to treat my veils.
With fingers vain I tampered with my Self.
Speak not, but understand.
MERCHANT. What happened—then?
SOBEIDE. Ask not what happened; ask me not, I beg thee.
I had before been weary: 'twas the same
Up to the end. But now 'tis easy. Thou
Art good, I'll tell thee something else: my parents—
Thou knowest how they are—I bid thee take them
To live with thee.
MERCHANT. Yes, yes, but thou wilt live.
SOBEIDE. No, say not so; but mark, I fain would tell thee
A many things. Oh yes, that graybeard man.
He's very poor, take him into thy house
At my request.
MERCHANT. Now thou shalt bide with me.
I will thy every wish divine: breathe softly
As e'er thou wilt, yet I will be the lyre
To answer every breath with harmony,
Until thou weary and bid it be still.
SOBEIDE. Say not such words, for I am dizzy and
They flicker in my eyes. Lament not much,
I beg of thee. If I remained alive,
All mangled as I am, I never could
Bring children into life for thee; my body
Would be so ugly, whereas formerly
I know I had some beauty. This would be
So hard for thee to bear and hide from me.
But I shall die at once, I know, my dear.
This is so strange: our spirits dwell in us
Like captive birds. And when the cage is shattered,

It flies away. No, no, thou must not smile:
I feel it is so. Look, the flowers know it,
And shine the brighter since I know it too.
Canst thou not understand? Mark well my words. [*Pause.*]
Art thou still there, and I too, all this while?
Oh, now I see thy face, and it is other
Than e'er I saw till now. Art thou my husband?

MERCHANT. My child!

SOBEIDE. 'Thy spirit seems to bend and lean
Out of thine eyes, and oh, the words thou speakest!
They quiver in the air, because the heart
So quivers, whence they come. Weep not, I can
Not bear it, for I love thee so. O let
Me see as last of all thine eyes. We should
Have lived together long and had our children.
But now 'tis fearful — for my parents.
[*Dies.*]

MERCHANT (*half bowed*).
Thus noiseless falls a star. Meseems, her heart
Was never close united with the world.
And what have I of her, except this glance,
Whose closing was involved in rigid Lethe,
And in such words as by false breath of life
Were made to sound so strong, e'en while they faded,
Just as the wind, ere he lies down to sleep,
Deceitful swells the sails as ne'er before.
[*He rises.*]
Aye, lift her up. So bitter is this life:
A wish was granted her, and that one door
At which she lay with longing and desire
Was oped — and back she came in such distress,
Death-stricken, that but issued forth the evening prior —
As fishers, cheeks with sun and moon afire,
Prepare their nets — in hopes of great success.
[*They lift up the body to carry it in.*]

ARTHUR SCHNITZLER

THE GREEN COCKATOO

A GROTESQUE IN ONE ACT

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

EMILE, *Duc de Cadignan*
FRANÇOIS, *Vicomte de Nogeant*
ALBIN, *Chevalier de la Tremouille*
MARQUIS DE LANSAC
SÉVERINE, *his wife*
ROLLIN, *Poet*
PROSPER (*formerly Theatre Manager*), HOST
HENRI
BALTHASAR
GUILLAUME
SCAEVOLA
JULES
ETIENNE } *His troupe*
MAURICE
GEORGETTE
MICHETTE
FLIPOTTE
LÉCARDIE, *Actress, wife of Henri*
GRASSET, *Philosopher*
LEBRÊT, *Tailor*
GRAIN, *a vagabond*
THE COMMISSAIRE OF POLICE

Nobles, Actors, Actresses, Citizens, and Citizens' Wives

e Action takes place in Paris in the evening of the 14th July, 1789, in nderground tavern of PROSPER.

THE GREEN COCKATOO (1899)

TRANSLATED BY HORACE SAMUEL

SCENE.—THE TAVERN OF THE GREEN COCKATOO

A medium-sized underground room. Seven steps lead down to it on the Right (rather far back). The stairs are shut off by a door on top. A second door which is barely visible is in the background on the Left. A number of simple wooden tables with chairs around them fill nearly the whole room. On the Left in the Centre is a bar; behind the bar a number of barrels with pipes. The room is lighted by small oil lamps which hang from the ceiling.

The HOST, PROSPER. *Enter the citizens* LEBRÊT *and* GRASSET.

GRASSET (*coming down the steps*). Come in, Lebrêt. I know the tap. My old friend and chief has always got a cask of wine smuggled away somewhere or other, even when all the rest of Paris is perishing of thirst.

HOST. Good evening, Grasset. So you show your face again, do you? Away with Philosophy! Have you a wish to take an engagement with me again?

GRASSET. The idea! Bring some wine rather. I am the guest—you the host.

HOST. Wine? Where shall I get wine from, Grasset? They've sacked all the wine-shops in Paris this very night. And I would lieve wager that you had a hand therein.

GRASSET. Out with the wine. The mob who are coming an hour after us are bound— (*Listening.*) Do you hear anything, Lebrêt?

LEBRÊT. It is like slight thunder.

GRASSET. Good! — Citizens of Paris — (*To* HOST.) You're sure to have another barrel in reserve for the mob—so out with our wine; my friend and admirer, the Citizen Lebrêt, tailor of the Rue St. Honoré, will pay for everything.

ARTHUR SCHNITZLER

LEBRÊT. Certainly, certainly, I will pay.

[HOST *hesitates.*]

GRASSET. Show him that you have money, Lebrêt.

[LEBRÊT *draws out his purse.*]

HOST. Now I will see if I— (*He opens the cock of a barrel and fills two glasses.*) Where do you come from, Grasset? The Palais-Royal?

GRASSET. For sure—I made a speech there. Ay, my good friend, it is my turn now. Do you know whom I spoke after?

HOST. Well?

GRASSET. After Camille Desmoulins. Yes, indeed, I dared to do it. And tell me, Lebrêt, who had the greater applause—Desmoulins or I?

LEBRÊT. You—without a doubt.

GRASSET. And how did I bear myself?

LEBRÊT. Splendidly.

GRASSET. Do you hear, Prosper? I placed myself on the table—I looked like a monument—indeed I did—and all the thousands—five thousands, ten thousands, assembled round me—just as they had done before round Camille Desmoulins—and cheered me.

LEBRÊT. It was a louder cheer.

GRASSET. Indeed it was . . . not much louder, but it was louder. And now they're all moving toward the Bastille . . . and I make bold to say they have followed my call. I swear to you before the evening is out we shall have it.

HOST. Yes, to be sure, if the walls fall down before your speeches!

GRASSET. What—speeches—are you deaf? 'Tis a case of shooting now. Our valiant soldiers are there. They have the same hellish fury against the accursed prison as we have. They know that their brothers and fathers sit imprisoned behind those walls. . . . But there would have been no shooting if we had not spoken. My dear Prosper, great is the power of intellect. There—(*to* LEBRÊT) where are the papers?

LEBRÊT. Here! (*Pulls pamphlets out of his pocket.*)

GRASSET. Here are the latest pamphlets which have just been distributed in the Palais-Royal. Here is one by my friend Cerutti—"Memorial for the French People;" here is one by Desmoulins, who certainly speaks better than he writes—"Free France."

HOST. When's your own pamphlet going to appear—the one you're always talking about, you know?

GRASSET. We need no more. The time has come for deeds. Anyone who sits within his four walls today is a knave. Every real man must go out into the streets.

LEBRÊT. Bravo!—Bravo!

GRASSET. In Toulon they have killed the mayor; in Brignolles they have sacked a dozen houses; but we in Paris are always sluggards and will put up with anything.

HOST. You can scarcely say that now.

LEBRÊT (*who has been drinking steadily*). Up, you citizens, up!

GRASSET. Up! Lock up your shop and come with us now.

HOST. I'll come right enough, when the time comes.

GRASSET. Ay, to be sure, when there is no more danger.

HOST. My good friend, I love Liberty as well as you do, but my calling comes before everything.

GRASSET. There is only one calling now for citizens of Paris—freeing their brothers.

HOST. Yes, for those who have nothing else to do!

LEBRÊT. What says he? He makes game of us.

HOST. Never dreamt of it. But now, my friends, look to it that you go away—my performance will begin in a minute, and I can't find you a job in it.

LEBRÊT. What performance? Is this a theatre?

HOST. Certainly, 'tis a theatre. Why, only a fortnight ago your friend was playing here.

LEBRÊT. Were you playing here, Grasset? . . . Why do you let the fellow jeer at you like that without punishing him?

GRASSET. Calm yourself—it is true; I did play here. This is no ordinary tavern: 'tis a den of thieves. Come.

HOST. You'll pay first.

LEBRÊT. If this is a den of thieves I won't pay a single sou.

HOST. Explain to your friend where he is.

GRASSET. This is a strange place. People who play criminals come here — and others who are criminals without suspecting it.

LEBRÊT. Indeed?

GRASSET. I would have you mark that what I just said was very witty; it is positively capable of making the substance of a whole speech.

LEBRÊT. I don't understand a word of all you say.

GRASSET. I was simply telling you that Prosper was my manager. And he is still playing comedy with his actors, but a different kind from before. My former gentlemen and lady colleagues sit around and behave as though they were criminals. Do you understand? They tell blood-curdling stories of things that have never happened to them — speak of crimes they have never committed . . . and the audience that comes here enjoys the pleasant titillation of hob-nobbing with the most dangerous rabble in Paris — swindlers, burglars, murderers — and —

LEBRÊT. What kind of an audience?

HOST. The most elegant people in Paris.

GRASSET. Noble —

HOST. Gentlemen of the Court.

LEBRÊT. Down with them!

GRASSET. It does 'em good. It gives a fillip to their jaded senses. 'Twas here that I made my start, Lebrêt — here that I delivered my first speech as though for a joke; here it was that I first began to hate the dogs who sat amongst us with all their fine clothes and perfumes and rottenness . . . and I am very glad indeed, my good Lebrêt, that you, too, should see just for once the place from which your great friend raised himself. (*In another tone.*) I say, Prosper, supposing the business doesn't come off —

HOST. What business?

GRASSET. Why, my political career—will you engage me again?

HOST. Not for anything!

GRASSET (*lightly*). Why—I thought there might be still room for somebody besides your Henri.

HOST. Apart from that . . . I should be afraid that you might forget yourself one fine day and fall foul in earnest of one of my paying customers.

GRASSET (*flattered*). That would certainly be possible—

HOST. I—I have control over myself—

GRASSET. Frankly, Prosper, I must say that I would admire you for your self-control, if I happened not to know that you are a poltroon.

HOST. Ah! my friend, I am satisfied with what I can do in my own line. I get enough pleasure out of being able to tell the fellows my opinion of them to their faces and to insult them to my heart's content—while they take it for a joke. That, too, is a way of venting one's wrath. (*Draws a dagger and makes it flash.*)

LEBRÊT. Citizen Prosper, what is the meaning of this?

GRASSET. Have no fear. I wager that the dagger is not even sharpened.

HOST. In that, my friend, you may be making a mistake. One fine day the jest may turn to earnest—and so I am ready for all emergencies.

GRASSET. The day is nigh. We live in great times. Come, Citizen Lebrêt, we will go to our comrades. Farewell, Prosper; you will see me either a great man or never again.

LEBRÊT (*giddily*). As a great man—or—not at all.

[*Exeunt.* HOST *remains behind, sits on a table, opens a pamphlet, and reads aloud.*]

HOST. "Now that the beast is in the noose, throttle it." He doesn't write badly, that little Desmoulins. "Never was richer booty offered to the victors. Forty thousand palaces and castles, two-fifths of all the property

in France, will be the reward of valor. Those who plume themselves on being conquerors will be put beneath the yoke, the nation will be purged."

Enter the COMMISSAIRE.

HOST (*sizing him up*). Hallo—the rabble's beginning to come in pretty early tonight.

COMMISSAIRE. My dear Prosper, don't start any of your jokes on me; I am the Commissaire of your district.

HOST. And how can I be of any service?

COMMISSAIRE. I have orders to attend the performance in your tavern this evening.

HOST. It will be an especial honor for me.

COMMISSAIRE. 'Tis nothing of that, my excellent Prosper. The authorities wish to have definite information as to what really goes on in your place. For some weeks—

HOST. This is a place of amusement, M. le Commissaire—nothing more.

COMMISSAIRE. Let me finish what I was saying. For some weeks past this place is said to have been the theatre of wild orgies.

HOST. You are falsely informed, M. le Commissaire. We make jokes here, nothing more.

COMMISSAIRE. It begins with that, I know. But it finishes up in another way, so I am informed. You have been an actor.

HOST. A manager, sir—manager of a first-class troupe who last played in Denis.

COMMISSAIRE. That is immaterial. Then you came into a small legacy.

HOST. Not worth speaking about, M. le Commissaire.

COMMISSAIRE. Your troupe split up.

HOST. And my legacy as well.

COMMISSAIRE (*smiling*). Very well! (*Both smile. Suddenly serious.*) You started a tavern.

HOST. That fared wretchedly.

COMMISSAIRE. After which you had an idea that, which, as one must admit, possesses a certain quantum of originality.

HOST. You make me quite proud, sir.

COMMISSAIRE. You gathered your troupe together again, and have a comedy played here which is of a peculiar and by no means harmless character.

HOST. If it were harmful, M. le Commissaire, I should not have my audience — the most aristocratic audience in Paris, I'm in a position to say. The Vicomte de Nogeant is my daily customer. The Marquis de Lansac often comes, and the Duc de Cadignan, M. le Commissaire, is the most enthusiastic admirer of my leading actor, the celebrated Henri Baston.

COMMISSAIRE. As well as of the art or arts of your actresses.

HOST. When you get to know my little actresses, M. le Commissaire, you won't blame anybody in the whole world for that.

COMMISSAIRE. Enough. The authorities have been informed that the entertainments which your — what shall I say — ?

HOST. The word "artists" ought to suffice.

COMMISSAIRE. I will decide on the word "subjects" — that the entertainments which your subjects provide transgress in every sense the limits the laws allow. Speeches are said to be delivered by your — what shall I say? — by your artist-criminals which — what does my information say? — (*he reads from a notebook, as he had been doing previously*) which are calculated to produce not only an immoral effect, which would bother us but little, but a highly seditious effect — a matter to which the authorities absolutely cannot be indifferent, at a time so agitated as the one in which we live.

HOST. M. le Commissaire, I can only answer that accusation by politely inviting you to see the thing just once for yourself. You will observe that nothing of a seditious nature takes place here, if only because my audience will not permit itself to be made seditious. There is simply a theatrical performance here, that is all.

COMMISSAIRE. I naturally cannot accept your invitation, but I will stay here by virtue of my office.

HOST. I think I can promise you a first-class entertainment, M. le Commissaire; but I will take the liberty of advising you to doff your official garb and to appear here in civilian clothes. If people actually saw a Commissaire in uniform here, both the spontaneity of my artists and the mood of my audience would suffer thereby.

COMMISSAIRE. You are right, M. Prosper; I will go away and come back as an elegant young man.

HOST. You will have no difficulty about that, M. le Commissaire. You would be welcomed here even as a vagabond—that would not excite attention—but not as a Commissaire.

COMMISSAIRE. Good-by. (*Starts to go.*)

HOST (*bowing*). When will the blessed day come when I can treat you and your damned likes—?

[*The* COMMISSAIRE *meets* GRAIN *in the doorway.* GRAIN *is in absolute rags and gives a start when he sees the* COMMISSAIRE. *The latter looks at him first, smiles, and then turns courteously to* HOST.]

COMMISSAIRE. One of your artists already? [*Exit.*]

GRAIN (*whining pathetically*). Good evening.

HOST (*after looking at him for a long time*). If you're one of my troupe, I won't grudge you my recognition . . . of your art, because I don't recognize you.

GRAIN. What do you mean?

HOST. No jests now; take off your wig; I'd rather like to know who you are. (*He pulls at his hair.*)

GRAIN. Oh, dear!

HOST. But 'tis genuine! Heavens—who are you? You appear to be a real ragamuffin.

GRAIN. I am!

HOST. What do you want of me?

GRAIN. Have I the honor of speaking to Citizen Prosper?—the host of The Green Cockatoo?

HOST. I am he.

GRAIN. My name is Grain, sometimes Carniche—very often Shrieking Pumice-stone; but I was sent to prison, Citizen Prosper, under the name of Grain, and that is the real point.

HOST. Ah, I understand. You want to play in my establishment and start off with playing me. Good. Go on.

GRAIN. Citizen Prosper, don't look upon me as a swindler. I am a man of honor. If I tell you that I was imprisoned, 'tis the complete truth.

[HOST *looks at him suspiciously.*]

GRAIN (*pulling a paper out of his pocket*). Here, Citizen Prosper, you can see from this that I was let out yesterday afternoon at four o'clock.

HOST. After two years' imprisonment! Zounds, 'tis genuine!

GRAIN. Were you all the time doubting it, then, Citizen Prosper?

HOST. What did you do to get two years?

GRAIN. I would have been hanged; but I was lucky enough to be still half a child when I killed my poor aunt.

HOST. Nay, fellow, how can a man kill his own aunt?

GRAIN. Citizen Prosper, I would never have done it if my aunt had not deceived me with my best friend.

HOST. Your aunt?

GRAIN. That's it—she was dearer to me than aunts usually are to their nephews. The family relations were peculiar—it made me embittered, most embittered. May I tell you about it?

HOST. Go on telling—perhaps you and I will be able to do business together.

GRAIN. My sister was but half a child when she ran away from home—and whom do you think she went with?

HOST. 'Tis difficult to guess.

GRAIN. With her uncle. And he left her in the lurch—with a child—

HOST. A whole one, I hope.

GRAIN. 'Tis indelicate of you, Citizen Prosper, to jest about such things.

HOST. I'll tell you what, Shrieking Pumice-stone, you—your family history bores me. Do you think I'm here to listen to every Tom, Dick, or Harry o' a ragamuffin telling me whom he has killed? What's all that go to do with me? I take it you wish something of me.

GRAIN. Ay, truly, Citizen Prosper; I've come to ask you for work.

HOST (*sarcastically*). I would have you mark that there are no aunts to murder in my place—this is a house of entertainment.

GRAIN. Oh, I found the once quite enough. I want to become a respectable member of society—I was recommended to come to you.

HOST. By whom, if I may ask?

GRAIN. A charming young man whom they put in my cell three days ago. Now he's alone. His name's Gaston! . . . and you know him.

HOST. Gaston! Now I know why I've missed him for three evenings. One of my best interpreters of pickpockets. He told yarns— ah! it made 'em split their sides.

GRAIN. Quite so. And now they've nabbed him.

HOST. Nabbed—what do you mean? He didn't really steal I suppose.

GRAIN. Yes, he did. But it must have been the first time, for he seems to have gone about it with incredible clumsiness. Just think of it—(*confidentially*)—just made a grab at the pocket of a lady in the Boulevard des Capucines, and pulled out her purse—an absolute amateur. You inspire me with confidence, Citizen Prosper, and so I'll make a confession to you. There was a time when I, too, transacted little bits of business of that sort, but never without my dear father. When I was still a child, when we all lived together, when my poor aunt was still alive—

HOST. What are you moaning for? I think 'tis in bad taste. You ought not to have killed her.

GRAIN. Too late. But the point I was coming to is—take me on here. I will do just the opposite of Gaston. He played the thief and became one—

HOST. I will give you a trial. You will produce a fine effect with your make-up. And at a given moment you'll just describe the aunt matter—how it all happened—someone or other will be sure to ask you.

GRAIN. I thank you, Citizen Prosper. And with regard to my wages—

HOST. Tonight you will play on trial, and I am, therefore, not yet in a position to pay you wages. But you will get good stuff to eat and drink; and I shall not mind a franc or so for a night's lodging.

GRAIN. I thank you. And just introduce me to your other colleagues as a visitor from the provinces.

HOST. Oh, no. We will tell them right away that you are a real murderer. They will much prefer that.

GRAIN. Pardon me. I don't wish to do anything against my interests, but I don't see why—

HOST. When you have been on the boards a bit longer, you will understand.

Enter SCAEVOLA *and* JULES.

SCAEVOLA. Good evening, Chief.

HOST. How many times have I got to tell you that the whole joke falls flat if you call me Chief?

SCAEVOLA. Well, whatever you are, I don't think we shall play tonight.

HOST. And why?

SCAEVOLA. The people won't be in the mood. There's a hellish uproar in the streets, and in front of the Bastille especially they are yelling like men possessed.

HOST. What matters that to us? The shouting has been going on for months, and our audience hasn't stayed away from us. It goes on diverting itself just as it did before.

SCAEVOLA. Ay, it has the gaiety of people who are shortly going to be hanged.

HOST. If only I live to see it!

SCAEVOLA. In the meanwhile, give us something to drink to get me into the vein. I don't feel at all in the vein tonight.

HOST. That's often the case with you, my friend. I must tell you that I was most dissatisfied with you last night.

SCAEVOLA. Why so, if I may ask?

HOST. The story about the burglary was simply babyish.

SCAVEOLA. Babyish?

HOST. To be sure. Absolutely incredible. Mere roaring is of no avail.

SCAEVOLA. I didn't roar.

HOST. You are always roaring. It will really be necessary for me to rehearse things with you. One can never rely on your inspirations. Henri is the only one.

SCAEVOLA. Henri—never anything but Henri! Henri simply plays to the gallery. My burglary of last night was a masterpiece. Henri will never do anything as good as that as long as he lives. If I don't satisfy you, my friend, then I'll just go to a proper theatre. Anyhow, yours is nothing but a cheap-jack establishment. Hallo! (*Notices* GRAIN.) Who is this? He isn't one of our lot, is he? Perhaps you've just engaged someone? But what a make-up the fellow has!

HOST. Calm yourself. 'Tis not a professional actor. 'Tis a real murderer.

SCAEVOLA. Oh, indeed. (*Goes up to him.*) Very glad to know you. My name is Scaevola.

GRAIN. My name is Grain.

[JULES *has been walking around in the room the whole time, frequently standing still, like a man tortured inwardly.*]

HOST. What ails you, Jules?

JULES. I am learning my part.

HOST. What?

JULES. Remorse. Tonight I am playing a man who is a prey to remorse. Look at me. What do you think of the furrow in the forehead here? Do I not look as though all the furies of hell— (*Walks up and down.*)

SCAEVOLA (*roars*). Wine—wine, here!

HOST. Calm yourself. . . . There is no audience yet.

Enter HENRI *and* LÉOCADIE.

HENRI. Good evening. (*He greets those sitting at the back with a light wave of his hand.*) Good evening, gentlemen.

HOST. Good evening, Henri. What do I see?—you and Léocadie together?

GRAIN (*who has noticed* LÉOCADIE, *to* SCAEVOLA). Why, I know her. (*Speaks softly with the others.*)

LÉOCADIE. Yes, my dear Prosper, it is I.

HOST. I have not seen you for a year on end. Let me greet you. (*He tries to kiss her.*)

HENRI. Stop that. (*His eyes often rest on* LÉOCADIE *with pride and passion, but also a certain anxiety.*)

HOST. But, Henri—as between old comrades—your old chief Léocadie!

LÉOCADIE. Oh, the good old times, Prosper!

HOST. What are you sighing about? When a wench has made her way in the way you have! No doubt about it, a pretty young woman has always a much easier time of it than we have.

HENRI (*wild with rage*). Stop it.

HOST. Why the deuce do you keep on shouting at me like that? Because you've picked up with her once more?

HENRI. Hold your tongue—she became my wife yesterday.

HOST. Your . . . ? (*To* LÉOCADIE.) Is he joking?

LÉOCADIE. He has really married me. Yes.

HOST. Then I congratulate you. . . . I say, Scaevola, Jules, Henri is married.

SCAEVOLA (*comes to the front*). I wish you joy (*winks at* LÉOCADIE).

[JULES *shakes hands with them both.*]

GRAIN (*to* HOST). Ah! How strange! I saw that woman —a few minutes after I was let out.

HOST. What do you mean?

GRAIN. She was the first pretty woman I'd seen for two years. I was very moved. But it was another gentleman with whom— (*Goes on speaking to* HOST.)

HENRI (*in an exalted tone as though inspired, but not theatrically*). Léocadie, my love, my wife . . . all the past is over now. A great deal is blotted out on an occasion like this.

[SCAEVOLA *and* JULES *have gone to the back.* HOST *comes forward again.*]

HOST. What sort of occasion?

HENRI. We are united now by a holy sacrament. That means more than any human oath. God is now watching over us, and one ought to forget everything which has happened beforé. Léocadie, a new age is dawning. Everything becomes holy now, Léocadie. Our kisses, however wild they may be, are holy from henceforth. Léocadie, my love, my wife! (*He contemplates her with an ardent glance.*) Isn't her expression quite different, Prosper, from what you ever knew her to have before? Is not her forehead pure? What has been is blotted out—not so, Léocadie?

LÉOCADIE. Surely, Henri.

HENRI. And all is well. We leave Paris tomorrow. Léocadie makes her last appearance tonight at the Porte St. Martin, and I am playing here tonight for the last time.

HOST. Are you mad, Henri? Do you want to desert me? Besides, the manager of the Porte St. Martin will never think of letting Léocadie go away. Why, she makes the fortune of his house. The young gentlemen stream thither, so they say.

HENRI. Hold your peace. Léocadie will go with me. She will never desert me. Tell me that you will never desert me, Léocadie. (*Brutally.*) Tell me.

ALBIN. Well, I do so because they actually held a meeting in our village — quite openly — and at the meeting they actually called my great-uncle, the Comte de Tremouille, a corn-usurer.

FRANÇOIS. Is that all?

ALBIN. Nay, is that not enough?

FRANÇOIS. We will go to the Palais-Royal tomorrow, and there you will have a chance of hearing the monstrous speeches the fellows make. But we let them speak — it is the best thing to do. They are good people at bottom; one must let them bawl themselves out in that way.

ALBIN (*pointing to* SCAEVOLA, *etc.*). What suspicious characters those are! Just see how they look at one. (*He feels for his sword.*)

FRANÇOIS (*draws his hand away*). Don't be ridiculous. (*To the three others.*) You need not begin yet; wait till there is more audience. (*To* ALBIN.) They're the most respectable people in the world, actors are. I will warrant you have already sat at table with worse knaves.

ALBIN. But they were better attired. [HOST *brings wine.*]

Enter MICHETTE *and* FLIPOTTE.

FRANÇOIS. God be with you, children! Come and sit down by us.

MICHETTE. Here we are. Come along, Flipotte. She is still somewhat shy.

FLIPOTTE. Good evening, young gentleman.

ALBIN. Good evening, ladies.

MICHETTE. The little one is a dear. (*She sits on* ALBIN'S *lap.*)

ALBIN. But, François, please explain, are these respectable ladies?

MICHETTE. What does he say?

FRANÇOIS. No, that's not quite the word for the ladies who come here. Odds life, you are silly, Albin!

HOST. What shall I bring for their Graces?

MICHETTE. Bring me a very sweet wine.

FRANÇOIS (*pointing to* FLIPOTTE). A friend of yours?

MICHETTE. We live together. Yes, we have only one bed between us.

FLIPOTTE (*blushing*). Would you find it a very great nuisance should you come and see her? (*Sits on* FRANÇOIS'S *lap.*)

ALBIN. She is not at all shy.

SCAEVOLA (*stands up; gloomily turning to the table where the young people are*). At last I've found you. (*To* ALBIN.) And you, you miserable seducer, aren't you ashamed that you . . . She is mine.

[HOST *looks on.*]

FRANÇOIS (*to* ALBIN). A joke—a joke. . . .

ALBIN. She isn't his—

MICHETTE. Go away. You let me sit where I want to.

[SCAEVOLA *stands there with clenched fists.*]

HOST (*behind*). Now, now?

SCAEVOLA. Ha, ha!

HOST (*takes him by the collar*). Ha, ha! (*By his side.*) You have not a farthing's worth of talent. Roaring, that's the only thing you can do.

MICHETTE (*to* FRANÇOIS). Recently he did it much better.

SCAEVOLA (*to* HOST). I'm not in the vein. I'll make a better show later on, when more people are here; you see, Prosper, I need an audience.

Enter the DUC DE CADIGNAN.

DUKE. Already in full swing!

[MICHETTE *and* FLIPOTTE *go up to him.*]

MICHETTE. My sweet Duke.

FRANÇOIS. Good evening, Emile . . . (*introducing*) My young friend, Albin, Chevalier de Tremouille—the Duc de Cadignan.

DUKE. I am delighted to make your acquaintance. (*To the girls, who are hanging on to him.*) Leave me alone, children! (*To* ALBIN.) So you, too, are having a look at this droll tavern?

ALBIN. It bewilders me in the extreme.

FRANÇOIS. The Chevalier has only been in Paris a few days.

DUKE (*laughing*). Then you have certainly chosen a nice time.

ALBIN. How so?

MICHETTE. He still has that delicious perfume! There isn't another man in Paris who has such a pleasant smell. (*To* ALBIN.) . . . You can't perceive it like that.

DUKE. She speaks of the seven or eight hundred whom she knows as well as me.

FLIPOTTE. Will you let me play with your sword, dear? [*She draws his sword out of its sheath and flashes it about.*]

GRAIN (*to* HOST). He's the man—'twas him I saw her with— [HOST *lets him go on, seems astonished.*]

DUKE. Henri is not here yet, then? (*To* ALBIN.) If you see him, you will not regret having come here.

HOST (*to* DUKE). Oh, so you're here again, are you? I am glad. We shall not have the pleasure much longer.

DUKE. Why? I find it very nice at your place.

HOST. I believe that. But since in any case you will be one of the first . . .

ALBIN. What does that mean?

HOST. You understand me well enough. The favorites of fortune will be the first! (*Goes to the back.*)

DUKE (*after reflection*). If I were king, I would make him my Court Fool; I mean to say, I should have many Court Fools, but he would be one of them.

ALBIN. What did he mean by saying that you were too fortunate?

DUKE. He means, Chevalier . . .

ALBIN. Please, don't call me Chevalier. Everybody calls me Albin, simply Albin, just because I look so young.

DUKE (*smiling*). Good. . . . But you must call me Emile—eh?

ALBIN. With pleasure, if you allow it, Emile.

Permission Albert Langen, Munich

FROM OLAF GULBRANSSON'S "FAMOUS CONTEMPORARIES"

DUKE. They have a sinister wit, have these people.

FRANÇOIS. Why sinister? I find it quite reassuring. So long as the mob is in the mood for jests, it will never come to anything serious.

DUKE. Only the jests are much too strange. I learnt a thing today that gives food for thought.

FRANÇOIS. Tell us.

FLIPOTTE *and* MICHETTE. Ay, tell us, sweet Duke!

DUKE. Do you know Lelange?

FRANÇOIS. Of course—the village . . . the Marquis de Montferrat has one of his finest hunts there.

DUKE. Quite right; my brother is now at the castle with him, and he has written home about the things I am going to tell you. They have a mayor at Lelange who is very unpopular.

FRANÇOIS. If you can tell me the name of one who is popular—

DUKE. Just listen. The women of the village paraded in front of the mayor's house with a coffin.

FLIPOTTE. What? Did they carry it? Carry a coffin? I wouldn't like to carry a coffin for anything in the world.

FRANÇOIS. Hold your tongue. Nobody is asking you to carry a coffin. (*To the* DUKE.) Well?

DUKE. And one or two of the women went into the mayor's house and explained to him that he must die, but they would do him the honor of burying him.

FRANÇOIS. Well, have they killed him?

DUKE. No; at least, my brother doesn't write anything about it.

FRANÇOIS. Well then . . . blusterers, talkers, clowns—that's what they are. Today they're roaring in Paris at the Bastille for a change, just as they've already done half a dozen times before . . .

DUKE. Well, if I were king I should have made an end of it long ago.

ALBIN. Is it true that the king is so good-natured?

DUKE. You have not yet been presented to His Majesty?

FRANÇOIS. This is the first time the Chevalier has been in Paris.

DUKE. Yes, you are incredibly young. How old, if I may ask?

ALBIN. I only look so young; I am already seventeen.

DUKE. Seventeen!—how much is still in front of you! I am already four-and-twenty! . . . I am beginning to regret how much of my youth I have missed!

FRANÇOIS (*laughs*). That is good. You, Duke—you count every day lost in which you have not conquered a woman or killed a man.

DUKE. Only the unfortunate thing is that one never makes a conquest of the right woman, and always kills the wrong man. And that as a matter of fact is how one misses one's youth. You know what Rollin says?

FRANÇOIS. What does Rollin say?

DUKE. I was thinking of his new piece that they are playing at the Comédie—there is such a pretty simile in it. Don't you remember?

FRANÇOIS. I have no memory for verses.

DUKE. Nor have I, unfortunately . . . I only remember the sense. He says, youth which a man does not enjoy is like a feather-ball, which you leave lying in the sand instead of throwing it up into the air.

ALBIN (*like a wiseacre*). I think that is quite right.

DUKE. Is it not true? The feathers gradually lose their color and fall out. 'Tis better for it to fall into a bush where it cannot be found.

ALBIN. How should one understand that, Emile?

DUKE. 'Tis more a matter of feeling than of understanding. If I could repeat the verses, you would understand it at once.

ALBIN. I have an idea, Emile, that you, too, could make verses if you wished.

DUKE. Why?

ALBIN. Since you have been here, it seems to me as though life were flaming up.

DUKE (*smiling*). Yes? Is life flaming up?

FRANÇOIS. Won't you come and sit with us after all?

[*Meanwhile, two nobles come in and sit down at a distant table.* HOST *appears to be addressing insults to them.*]

DUKE. I cannot stay here. But in any case I will come back again.

MICHETTE. Stay with me.

FLIPOTTE. Take me with you. (*They try to hold him.*)

HOST (*coming to the front*). Just you leave him alone. You're not bad enough for him by a long way. He's got to run after a whore off the streets—that's where he feels most in his element.

DUKE. I shall certainly come back, if only not to miss Henri.

FRANÇOIS. What do you think, when we came, Henri was just going out with Léocadie.

DUKE. Really—he has married her. Did you know that?

FRANÇOIS. Is that so? What will the others have to say to it?

ALBIN. What others?

FRANÇOIS. She is loved all around, you know.

DUKE. And he wants to go away with her . . . what do I know about it? . . . Somebody told me.

HOST. Indeed? Did they tell you? (*Glances at the* DUKE.)

DUKE (*having first looked at* HOST). It is too silly. Léocadie was made to be the greatest, the most splendid whore in the world.

FRANÇOIS. Who doesn't know that?

DUKE. Could anything be more unreasonable than to take people away from their true calling? (*As* FRANÇOIS *laughs.*) I am not joking. Whores are born, not made—just as conquerors and poets are.

FRANÇOIS. You are paradoxical.

DUKE. I am sorry for her, and for Henri. He should stay here—no, not here—I should like to bring him to the Comédie—though even there—I always feel as

though nobody understood him as well as I do. Of course, that may be an illusion, since I have the same feeling in regard to most artists. But I must say if I were not the Duc de Cadignan, I should really like to be a comedian like him — like him, I say . . .

ALBIN. Like Alexander the Great.

DUKE (*smiling*). Yes, Alexander the Great. . . . (*To* FLIPOTTE.) Give me my sword. (*He puts it in the sheath. Slowly.*) It is the finest way of making fun of the world; a man who can play any part and at the same time play us is greater than all of us. (ALBIN *looks at him in astonishment.*) Don't you reflect on what I say. 'Tis all only true at the actual moment. Good-by.

MICHETTE. Give me a kiss before you go.

FLIPOTTE. Me too!

[*They hang on to him, the* DUKE *kisses them both at once and goes. In the meanwhile:*]

ALBIN. A wonderful man!

FRANÇOIS. That is quite true; . . . but the existence of men like that is almost a reason for not marrying.

ALBIN. But do explain; what are those girls?

FRANÇOIS. Actresses. They, too, belong to the troupe of Prosper, who is at present the host of the tavern. No doubt they've done in the past much the same as they're doing now.

[GUILLAUME *rushes in apparently breathless.*]

GUILLAUME (*making toward the table where the actors are sitting, with his hand on his heart — speaking with difficulty — supporting himself*). Saved — ay, saved!

SCAEVOLA. What is it? What ails you?

ALBIN. What has happened to the man?

FRANÇOIS. That is part of the acting now. Mark you.

ALBIN. Ah!

MICHETTE *and* FLIPOTTE (*going quickly to* GUILLAUME). What is it? What ails you?

SCAEVOLA. Sit down. Take a draught!

GUILLAUME. More!—more! Prosper, more wine! I have been running. My tongue cleaves to my mouth. They were right at my heels.

JULES (*gives a start*). Ah! be careful; they really are at our heels.

HOST. Come, tell us, what happened then? (*To the actors.*) Movement!—more movement!

GUILLAUME. Women here . . . women—ah! (*Embraces* FLIPOTTE.) That brings one back to life again! (*To* ALBIN, *who is highly impressed.*) The Devil take me, my boy, if I thought I would ever see you alive again. (*As though he were listening.*) They come!—they come! (*Goes to the door.*) No, it is nothing . . . They . . .

ALBIN. How strange! There really is a noise, as though people outside were pressing forward very quickly. Is that part of the stage effects as well?

SCAEVOLA. He goes in for such damned subtleties every blessed time. (*To* JULES.) 'Tis too silly—

HOST. Come now, tell us why they are at your heels again?

GUILLAUME. Oh, nothing special. But if they got me, it would cost me my head. I've set fire to a house.

[*During this scene young nobles come in and sit down at the tables.*]

HOST (*softly*). Go on!—go on!

GUILLAUME (*in the same tone*). What more do you want? Isn't it enough for you if I've set fire to a house?

FRANÇOIS. But tell me, my friend, why you set fire to the house.

GUILLAUME. Because the President of the Supreme Court lived in it. We wanted to make a beginning with him. We wanted to keep the good Parisian householders from taking folk into their houses so lightly who send us poor devils to the prison.

GRAIN. That's good! That's good!

GUILLAUME (*looks at* GRAIN *and is surprised; then goes on speaking*). All the houses must be fired. Three more fellows like me and there won't be any more judges in Paris.

GRAIN. Death to the judges!

JULES. Yes . . . but there may be one whom we can't annihilate.

GUILLAUME. I should like to know who he is.

JULES. The judge within us.

HOST (*softly*). That's tasteless. Leave off. Scaevola, roar! Now's the time.

SCAEVOLA. Wine here, Prosper; we want to drink to the death of all the judges in France.

[*During the last words enter the* MARQUIS DE LANSAC, *with his wife,* SÉVERINE, *and* ROLLIN, *the poet.*]

SCAEVOLA. Death to all who have the power in their hands today!

MARQUIS. See you, Séverine, that is how they greet us.

ROLLIN. Marquise, I warned you.

SÉVERINE. Why?

FRANÇOIS. Whom do I see? The Marquise! Allow me to kiss your hand. Good evening, Marquis. Well met to you, Rollin. And you, Marquise, you dare to venture into this place!

SÉVERINE. I heard such a lot about it. And besides, we are having a day of adventures already — eh, Rollin?

MARQUIS. Yes. Just think of it, Vicomte; you would never believe where we come from — from the Bastille.

FRANÇOIS. Are they still keeping up the tumult there?

SÉVERINE. Ay, indeed! It looks as though they meant to storm it.

ROLLIN (*declaiming*).

Like to a flood that seethes against its banks,
And rages deep that its own child, the Earth,
Resists it.—

SÉVERINE. Don't, Rollin! We left our carriages there in the neighborhood. It is a magnificent spectacle — there is always something so grand about crowds.

FRANÇOIS. Yes, yes, if they only did not smell so vilely.

MARQUIS. And my wife would not leave me in peace—I had to bring her here.

SÉVERINE. Well, what is there so very special here?

HOST (*to* LANSAC). Well, so you're here, are you, you dried-up old scoundrel? Did you bring your wife along because she wasn't safe enough for you at home?

MARQUIS (*with a forced laugh*). He's quite a character.

HOST. But take heed that she is not snatched away from under your nose in this very place. Aristocratic ladies like her very often get a deuce of a fancy to try what a real rogue is like.

ROLLIN. I suffer unspeakably, Séverine.

MARQUIS. My child, I prepared you for this—it is high time that we went.

SÉVERINE. What ails you? I think it's charming. Nay, let us seat ourselves.

FRANÇOIS. Would you allow me, Marquise, to present to you the Chevalier de la Tremouille. He is here for the first time, too. The Marquis de Lansac; Rollin, our celebrated poet.

ALBIN. Delighted. (*Compliments; they sit down.*) (*To* FRANÇOIS.) Is that one of those that are playing, or—I can't make it out—

FRANÇOIS. Don't be so stupid. That is the lawful wife of the Marquis de Lansac . . . a lady of extreme propriety.

ROLLIN (*to* SÉVERINE). Say that thou lovest me.

SÉVERINE. Yes, yes; but ask me not every minute.

MARQUIS. Have we missed a scene already?

FRANÇOIS. Nothing much. An incendiary 's playing over there, 'twould appear.

SÉVERINE. Chevalier, you must be the cousin of the little Lydia de la Tremouille who was married today.

ALBIN. Quite so, Marquise; that was one of the reasons why I came to Paris.

SÉVERINE. I remember having seen you in the church.

ALBIN (*embarrassed*). I am highly flattered, Marquise.

SÉVERINE (*to* ROLLIN). What a dear little boy!

ROLLIN. My dear Séverine, you have never yet managed to know a man without his pleasing you.

SÉVERINE. Indeed I did; and what is more, I married him straight away.

ROLLIN. I am always so afraid, Séverine—I am sure there are moments when it's not safe for you to be with your own husband.

HOST (*brings wine*). There you are. I wish it were poison; but for the time being, the law won't let us serve it to you, you scum.

FRANÇOIS. The time'll soon come, Prosper.

SÉVERINE (*to* ROLLIN). What is the matter with both those pretty girls? Why don't they come nearer? Now that we once are here, I want to join in everything. I really think that everything is extremely moral here.

MARQUIS. Have patience, Séverine.

SÉVERINE. I think nowadays one diverts oneself best in the streets. Do you know what happened to us yesterday when we went for a drive in the Promenade de Longchamps?

MARQUIS. Please, please, my dear Séverine, why—

SÉVERINE. A fellow jumped onto the footboard of our carriage and shouted, "Next year you will stand behind your coachman and we shall be sitting in the carriages."

FRANÇOIS. Hm! That is rather strong.

MARQUIS. Odds life! I don't think one ought to talk of such things. Paris is now somewhat feverish, but that will soon pass off again.

GUILLAUME (*suddenly*). I see flames—flames everywhere I look—red, high flames.

HOST (*to him*). You're playing a madman, not a criminal.

SÉVERINE. Does he see flames?

FRANÇOIS. But all this is still not the real thing, Marquise.

ALBIN (*to* ROLLIN). I cannot tell you how bewildered I feel already with everything.

MICHETTE (*comes to the* MARQUIS). I have not yet greeted you, darling, you dear old pig.

MARQUIS (*embarrassed*). She jests, dear Séverine.

SÉVERINE. It does not look that way. Tell me, little one, how many love-affairs have you had so far?

MARQUIS (*to* FRANÇOIS). It is really wonderful how well my wife the Marquise knows how to adapt herself to every situation.

ROLLIN. Yes, it is wonderful.

MICHETTE. Have you counted yours?

SÉVERINE. When I was still as young as you . . . of course . . .

ALBIN (*to* ROLLIN). Tell me, M. Rollin, is the Marquise joking, or is she really like—? I positively can't make it out.

ROLLIN. Reality . . . playing . . . do you know the difference so exactly, Chevalier?

ALBIN. At any rate . . .

ROLLIN. I don't. And what I find so peculiar here is that all apparent distinctions, so to speak, are taken away. Reality passes into play—play into reality. Just look now at the Marquise. How she gossips with those creatures as though she were one of them. At the same time she is—

ALBIN. Something quite different.

ROLLIN. I thank you, Chevalier.

HOST (*to* GRAIN). Well, how did it all happen?

GRAIN. What?

HOST. Why, the affair with your aunt, for which you went to prison for two years.

GRAIN. I told you, I strangled her.

FRANÇOIS. That is feeble. He is an amateur. I have never seen him before.

GEORGETTE (*comes quickly in, dressed like a prostitute of the lowest class*). Good evening, children. Is my Balthasar not here yet?

SCAEVOLA. Georgette, sit by me. Your Balthasar will yet be here in time.

GEORGETTE. If he is not here in ten minutes, he won't bring off anything again — he won't come back at all then.

FRANÇOIS. Watch her, Marquise. She is the wife of that Balthasar of whom she has just been speaking, and who will soon come in. She represents just a common street-jade, while Balthasar is her bully. All the same, she is the truest wife to be found in the whole of Paris.

BALTHASAR *comes in.*

GEORGETTE. My Balthasar! (*She runs toward him and embraces him*). So there you are.

BALTHASAR. It is all in order. (*Silence around him.*) It was not worth the trouble. I was almost sorry for him. You should size up your customers better, Georgette. I am sick of killing promising youths for the sake of a few francs.

FRANÇOIS. Splendid!

ALBIN. What — ?

FRANÇOIS. He brings out the points so well.

Enter the COMMISSAIRE, *disguised; sits down at table.*

HOST (*to him*). You come at a good time, M. le Commissaire. This is one of my best exponents.

BALTHASAR. One should really try and find another profession. On my soul, I am not a craven, but this kind of bread is hard earned.

SCAEVOLA. I can well believe so.

GEORGETTE. What's the matter with you today?

BALTHASAR. I will tell you what, Georgette — I think you're a trifle too tender with the young gentlemen.

GEORGETTE. See what a child he is! But be reasonable, Balthasar. I must needs be very tender so as to inspire them with confidence.

ROLLIN. What she says is really deep.

BALTHASAR. If I thought for a moment that you felt anything when another —

GEORGETTE. What do you say to that? Dumb jealousy will yet bring him to his grave.

BALTHASAR. I have already heard one sigh, Georgette, and that was at a moment when one of them was already giving sufficient proofs of his confidence.

GEORGETTE. One can't leave off playing a woman in love so suddenly.

BALTHASAR. Be careful, Georgette—the Seine is deep. (*Wildly.*) Should you ever deceive me—

GEORGETTE. Never, never.

ALBIN. I positively can't make it out.

SÉVERINE. Rollin, that is the right interpretation!

ROLLIN. You think so?

MARQUIS (*to* SÉVERINE). It is time we were going, Séverine.

SÉVERINE. Why? I am beginning to enjoy it.

GEORGETTE. My Balthasar, I adore you. (*Embrace.*)

FRANÇOIS. Bravo! bravo!

BALTHASAR. What loony is that?

COMMISSAIRE. This is unquestionably too strong; this is—

Enter MAURICE *and* ETIENNE. *They are dressed like young nobles, but one can see that they are only disguised in dilapidated theatrical costumes.*

FROM THE ACTORS' TABLE. Who are they?

SCAEVOLA. May the devil take me if it ain't Maurice and Etienne.

GEORGETTE. Of course it is they!

BALTHASAR. Georgette!

SÉVERINE. Heavens! what monstrously pretty young persons.

ROLLIN. It is painful, Séverine, to see you so violently excited by every pretty face.

SÉVERINE. What did I come here for, then?

ROLLIN. Tell me, at any rate, that you love me.

SÉVERINE (*with a peculiar look*). You have a short memory.

ETIENNE. Well, where do you think we have come from?

FRANÇOIS. Listen, Marquis; they're a couple of quite witty youths.

MAURICE. A wedding.

ETIENNE. One has got to dress up a bit in places like this. Otherwise one of those damned secret police gets on one's track at once.

SCAEVOLA. At any rate, have you made a good haul?

HOST. Let's have a look.

MAURICE (*drawing watches out of his waistcoat*). What'll you give me for this?

HOST. For that there? A louis.

MAURICE. Indeed?

SCAEVOLA. It is not worth more.

MICHETTE. That is a lady's watch. Give it to me, Maurice.

MAURICE. What will you give me for't?

MICHETTE. Look at me—isn't that enough?

FLIPOTTE. No, give it to me; look at me—

MAURICE. My dear children, I can have that without risking my head.

MICHETTE. You are a conceited ape.

SÉVERINE. I swear that's no acting.

ROLLIN. Of course not; there is a flash of reality running through the whole thing. That is the chief charm.

SCAEVOLA. What wedding was it, then?

MAURICE. The wedding of Mademoiselle de la Tremouille; she was married to the Comte de Banville.

ALBIN. Do you hear that, François? I assure you they are real knaves.

FRANÇOIS. Calm yourself, Albin. I know the two. I have seen them play a dozen times already. Their specialty is the portrayal of pickpockets.

[MAURICE *draws some purses out of his waistcoat.*]

SCAEVOLA. Well, you can do the handsome tonight.

ETIENNE. It was a very magnificent wedding. All the nobility of France was there. Even the King was represented.

ALBIN (*excited*). All that is true.

MAURICE (*rolls some money over the table*). That is for you, my friends, so that you can see that we all stick to one another.

FRANÇOIS. Properties, dear Albin. (*He stands up and takes a few coins.*) We, too, you see, come in for a share.

HOST. You take it—you have never earned anything so honestly in your life.

MAURICE (*holds in the air a garter set with diamonds*). And to whom shall I give this? (GEORGETTE, MICHETTE, *and* FLIPOTTE *make a rush after it.*) Patience, you sweet pusses. We will speak about that later on. I will give it to the one who devises a new caress.

SÉVERINE (*to* ROLLIN). Would you not like to let me join in the competition?

ROLLIN. I protest you will drive me mad, Séverine.

MARQUIS. Séverine, had we not better be going now? I think—

SÉVERINE. Oh, no. I am enjoying myself excellently. (*To* ROLLIN.) Ah well, my mood is getting so—

MICHETTE. How did you get hold of the garter?

MAURICE. There was such a crush in the church—and when a lady thinks one is courting her— (*All laugh.*)

[GRAIN *has stolen* FRANÇOIS'S *purse.*]

FRANÇOIS (*showing the money to* ALBIN). Mere counters. Are you satisfied now? [GRAIN *wants to get away.*]

HOST (*going after him softly*). Give me the purse at once which you took from this gentleman.

GRAIN. I—

HOST. Straightaway . . . or it will be the worse for you.

GRAIN. You need not be churlish. (*Gives it to him.*)

HOST. And stay here. I have no time to search you now. Who knows what else you have pouched. Go back to your place.

FLIPOTTE. I shall win the garter.

HOST (*throwing the purse to* FRANÇOIS). Here's your purse. You lost it out of your pocket.

FRANÇOIS. I thank you, Prosper. (*To* ALBIN.) You see, we are in reality in the company of most respectable people.

[HENRI, *who has already been present for some time and has sat behind, suddenly stands up.*]

ROLLIN. Henri — there is Henri.

SÉVERINE. Is he the one you told me so much about?

MARQUIS. Assuredly. The man one really comes here to see.

[HENRI *comes to the front of the stage, very theatrically; is silent.*]

THE ACTORS. Henri, what ails you?

ROLLIN. Observe the look. A world of passion. You see, he is playing the man who commits a crime of passion.

SÉVERINE. I prize that highly.

ALBIN. But why does he not speak?

ROLLIN. He is beside himself. Just watch. Pay attention. . . . He has wrought a fearful deed somewhere.

FRANÇOIS. He is somewhat theatrical. It looks as though he were going to get ready for a monologue.

HOST. Henri, Henri, where do you come from?

HENRI. I have murdered.

ROLLIN. What did I say?

SCAEVOLA. Whom?

HENRI. The lover of my wife.

[PROSPER *looks at him; at this moment he obviously has the feeling that it might be true.*]

HENRI (*looks up*). Well, yes, I've done it. What are you looking at me like that for? That's how the matter stands. Is it, then, so wonderful after all? You all know what kind of a creature my wife is; it was bound to end like that.

HOST. And she — where is she?

FRANÇOIS. See, the host takes it seriously. You notice how realistic that makes the thing.

[*Noise outside — not too loud.*]

JULES. What noise is that outside?

MARQUIS. Do you hear, Séverine?

ROLLIN. It sounds as though troops were marching by.

FRANÇOIS. Oh, no; it is our dear people of Paris. Just listen how they bawl. (*Uneasiness in the cellar; it grows quiet outside.*) Go on, Henri — go on.

HOST. Yes, do tell us, Henri — where is your wife? Where have you left her?

HENRI. Oh, I have no qualms about her. She will not die of it. Whether it is this man or that man, what do the women care? There are still a thousand other handsome men running about Paris — whether it is this man or that man —

BALTHASAR. May it fare thus with all who take our wives from us.

SCAEVOLA. All who take from us what belongs to us.

COMMISSAIRE (*to* HOST). These are seditious speeches.

ALBIN. It is dreadful . . . the people mean it seriously.

SCAEVOLA. Down with the usurers of France! We would fain wager that the fellow whom he caught with his wife was another again of those accursed hounds who rob us of our bread as well.

ALBIN. I propose we go.

SÉVERINE. Henri! — Henri!

MARQUIS. But, Marquise —

SÉVERINE. Please, dear Marquis, ask the man how he caught his wife — or I will ask him myself.

MARQUIS (*after resisting*). Tell us, Henri, how did you manage to catch the pair?

HENRI (*who has been for a long while sunk in reverie*). Know you my wife, then? She is the fairest and vilest creature under the sun. And I loved her! We have known one another for seven years — but it is only yesterday that she became my wife. In those seven years there was not one day, nay, not one day, in which she did not lie to me, for everything about her is a lie — her eyes and her lips, her kisses and her smiles.

FRANÇOIS. He rants a little.

HENRI. Every boy and every old man, every one who excited her and every one who paid her — every one, I think, who wanted her — has possessed her, and I have known it!

SÉVERINE. Not every one can boast as much.

HENRI. And all the same she loved me, my friends. Can any one of you understand that? She always came back to me again — from all quarters back again to me — from the handsome and from the ugly, from the shrewd and from the foolish, from ragamuffins and from courtiers — always came back to me.

SÉVERINE (*to* ROLLIN). Now, if only you had an inkling that it is just this coming back which is really love.

HENRI. What I suffered . . . tortures, tortures!

ROLLIN. It is harrowing.

HENRI. And yesterday I married her. We had a dream — nay, I had a dream. I wanted to get away with her from here. Into solitude, into the country, into the great peace. We wished to live like other happy married couples — we dreamt also of having a child —

ROLLIN (*softly*). Séverine.

SÉVERINE. Very good!

ALBIN. François, that man is speaking the truth.

FRANÇOIS. Quite so; the love-story is true, but the real pith is the murder-story.

HENRI. I was just one day too late. . . . There was just one man whom she had forgotten, otherwise — I believe — she wouldn't have wanted any one else. . . . But I caught them together . . . it is all over with him.

ACTORS. Who? — who? How did it happen? Where does he lie? Are you pursued? How did it happen? Where is she?

HENRI (*with growing excitement*). I escorted her . . . to the theatre . . . today was to be the last time. . . . I kissed her . . . at the door . . . and she went to her dressing-room . . . and I went off like a man who has nothing to fear. But when I had gone a hun-

dred yards, I began . . . to have . . . within me—do you understand? . . . a terrible unrest . . . and it was as though something forced me to turn round . . . and I turned round and went back. But once there I felt ashamed and went away again . . . and again I walked a hundred yards away from the theatre . . . and then something gripped me . . . again I went back. Her scene was at an end—she hasn't got much to do, she just stands awhile on the stage half naked—and then she has finished. I stood in front of her dressing-room, put my ear to the door, and heard whispers. I could not make out a word . . . the whispering ceased . . . I pushed open the door . . . (*he roars like a lion*) it was the Duc de Cadignan, and I murdered him.

HOST (*who now at last takes it for the truth*). Madman!

[HENRI *looks up, gazes fixedly at* HOST.]

SÉVERINE. Bravo!—bravo!

ROLLIN. What are you doing, Marquise? The moment you call out "bravo!" you make it all acting again—and the pleasant shudder is past.

MARQUIS. I do not find the shudder so pleasant. Let us applaud, my friends; that is the only way we can throw off the spell.

[*A gentle bravo, growing continually louder; all applaud.*]

HOST (*to* HENRI, *during the noise*). Save yourself—flee, Henri.

HENRI. What!—what!

HOST. Let this be enough, and see that you get away.

FRANÇOIS. Hush! . . . Let us hear what the host says.

HOST (*after a short reflection*). I am telling him that he ought to get away before the watch at the city gates are informed. The handsome Duke was a favorite of the King—they will break you on the wheel. Far better had it been had you stabbed that scum, your wife.

FRANÇOIS. What playing up to each other! . . . Splendid!

HENRI. Prosper, which of us is mad, you or I? (*He stands there and tries to read in* PROSPER'S *eyes.*)

ROLLIN. It is wonderful; we all know that he is acting, and yet if the Duc de Cadignan were to enter now, it would be like a ghost appearing.

[*Noise outside—growing stronger and stronger. People come in; shrieks are heard. Right at their head* GRASSET. *Others, among them* LEBRÊT, *force their way over the steps. Cries of* "Liberty! Liberty!" *are heard.*]

GRASSET. Here we are, my boys—in here!

ALBIN. What is that? Is that part of the performance?

FRANÇOIS. No.

MARQUIS. What means it?

SÉVERINE. What people are those?

GRASSET. In here! I tell you, my friend Prosper has still got a barrel of wine left, and we have earned it. (*Noise from the streets.*) Friend! Brother! We have them!—we have them!

SHOUTS (*from outside*). Liberty! Liberty!

SÉVERINE. What has happened?

MARQUIS. Let us get away—let us get away; the mob approaches.

ROLLIN. How do you propose to get away?

GRASSET. It has fallen; the Bastille has fallen!

HOST. What say you? Speaks he the truth?

GRASSET. Hear you not?

[ALBIN *wants to draw his sword.*]

FRANÇOIS. Stop that at once, or we are all lost.

GRASSET (*reeling in down the stairs*). And if you hasten, you will still be in time to see quite a merry sight . . . the head of our dear Delaunay stuck on a very high pole.

MARQUIS. Is the fellow mad?

SHOUTS. Liberty! Liberty!

GRASSET. We have cut off a dozen heads; the Bastille belongs to us; the prisoners are free! Paris belongs to the people!

HOST. Hear you?—hear you? Paris belongs to us!

GRASSET. See you how he gains courage now. Yes, shout away, Prosper; naught more can happen to you now.

HOST (*to the nobles*). What say you to it, you rabble? The joke is at an end.

ALBIN. Said I not so?

HOST. The people of Paris have conquered.

COMMISSAIRE. Silence! (*They laugh.*) Silence! I forbid the continuance of the performance!

GRASSET. Who is that nincompoop?

COMMISSAIRE. Prosper, I regard you as responsible for all these seditious speeches.

GRASSET. Is the fellow mad?

HOST. The joke is at an end. Don't you understand? Henri, do tell them—now you can tell them. We will protect you—the people of Paris will protect you.

GRASSET. Yea, the people of Paris.

[HENRI *stands there with a fixed stare.*]

HOST. Henri has really murdered the Duc de Cadignan.

ALBIN, FRANÇOIS, *and* MARQUIS. What says he?

ALBIN *and others.* What means all this, Henri?

FRANÇOIS. Henri, pray speak.

HOST. He found him with his wife and he has killed him.

HENRI. 'Tis not true!

HOST. You need fear naught more now; now you can shout it to all the world. I could have told you an hour past that she was the Duke's mistress. By God, I was nigh telling you—is't not true, you, Shrieking Pumice-stone?—did we not know it?

HENRI. Who has seen her? Where has she been seen?

HOST. What matters that to you now? The man's mad . . . you have killed him; of a truth you cannot do more.

FRANÇOIS. In heaven's name, is't really true or not?

HOST. Ay, it is true.

GRASSET. Henri, from henceforth you must be my friend. Vive la Liberté!—Vive la Liberté!

FRANÇOIS. Henri, speak, man!

HENRI. She was his mistress? She was the mistress of the Duke? I knew it not . . . he lives . . . he lives . . . (*Tremendous sensation.*)

SÉVERINE (*to the others*). Well, where's the truth now?

ALBIN. My God!

[*The* DUKE *forces his way through the crowd on the steps.*]

SÉVERINE (*who sees him first*). The Duke!

SOME VOICES. The Duke.

DUKE. Well, well, what is it?

HOST. Is it a ghost?

DUKE. Not that I know of. Let me through!

ROLLIN. What won't we wager that it is all arranged! The fellows yonder belong to Prosper's troupe. Bravo, Prosper! This is a real success.

DUKE. What is it? Is the playing still going on here, while outside . . . but don't you know what manner of things are taking place outside? I have seen Delaunay's head carried past on a pole. Nay, why do you look at me like that? (*Steps down.*) Henri—

FRANÇOIS. Guard yourself from Henri.

[HENRI *rushes like a madman on the* DUKE *and plunges a dagger into his neck.*]

COMMISSAIRE (*stands up*). This goes too far!

ALL. He bleeds.

ROLLIN. A murder has been done here.

SÉVERINE. The Duke is dying.

MARQUIS. I am distracted, dear Séverine, to think that today of all days I should have brought you to this place.

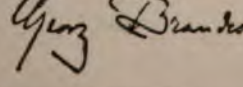
SÉVERINE. Why not? (*In a strained tone.*) It is a wonderful success. One does not see a real duke really murdered every day.

ROLLIN. I cannot grasp it yet.

COMMISSAIRE. Silence! Let no one leave the place!

GRASSET. What does he want?

Permission Albert Langen, Munich



From Olaf Gulbransson's " Famous Contemporaries "

COMMISSAIRE. I arrest this man in the name of the law.

GRASSET (*laughs*). It is we who make the laws, you blockheads! Out with the rabble! He who kills a duke is a friend of the people. Vive la Liberté!

ALBIN (*draws his sword*). Make way! Follow me, my friends! [LÉOCADIE *rushes in over the steps.*]

VOICES. His wife!

LÉOCADIE. Let me in here. I want my husband! (*She comes to the front, sees, and shrieks out.*) Who has done this? Henri! [HENRI *looks at her.*]

LÉOCADIE. Why have you done this?

HENRI. Why?

LÉOCADIE. I know why. Because of me. Nay, nay, say not 'twas because of me. Never in all my life have I been worth that.

GRASSET (*begins a speech*). Citizens of Paris, we will celebrate our victory. Chance has led us on our way through the streets of Paris to this amiable host. It could not have fitted in more prettily. Nowhere can the cry "Vive la Liberté!" ring sweeter than over the corpse of a duke.

VOICES. Vive la Liberté! Vive la Liberté!

FRANÇOIS. I think we might go. The people have gone mad. Let us go.

ALBIN. Shall we leave the corpse here?

SÉVERINE. Vive la Liberté! Vive la Liberté!

MARQUIS. Are you mad?

CITIZENS *and* ACTORS. Vive la Liberté! Vive la Liberté!

SÉVERINE (*leading the nobles to the exit*). Rollin, wait you tonight outside my window. I will throw the key down like t'other night. We will pass a pretty hour—I feel quite pleasurably excited.

SHOUTS. Vive la Liberté! Vive Henri! Vive Henri!

LEBRÊT. Look at the fellows—they are running away from us.

GRASSET. Let them for tonight—let them; they will not escape us.

CLEMENT. Don't remind me of it! I had awful luck that day. Windisch would never have won the race if he hadn't got ten lengths start. But this time—ah . . .! And the next day we go away.

MARGARET. In the evening.

CLEMENT. Yes . . . But why?

MARGARET. Because in the morning we shall be getting married, I suppose.

CLEMENT. Yes, yes, darling.

MARGARET. I'm so happy! (*Embraces him.*) And where shall we go?

CLEMENT. I thought we'd agreed about that—to my place in the country.

MARGARET. Yes, later. But can't we have a little while on the Riviera first?

CLEMENT. That'll depend on the Ladies' Plate; if I win it . . .

MARGARET. Dead certainty!

CLEMENT. And anyhow, in April the Riviera really isn't the thing any more.

MARGARET. Oh, that's it, is it?

CLEMENT. Of course that's it, child. You've retained from your old life certain conceptions of what's the thing which are—you'll forgive me for saying it—just a little like those of the comic papers.

MARGARET. Really, Clement . . .

CLEMENT. Oh well, we'll see. (*Goes on reading.*) Badegast fifteen to one . . .

MARGARET. Badegast? He won't be in it.

CLEMENT. How do you know that?

MARGARET. Szigrati himself told me.

CLEMENT. How was that? Where?

MARGARET. Why, yesterday up at the Freudenau, while you were talking to Milner.

CLEMENT. To my way of thinking, Szigrati isn't the right sort of company for you.

MARGARET. Jealous?

CLEMENT. Nonsense! Anyhow, after this I shall introduce you everywhere as my fiancée. (*She kisses him.*) Well, what did Szigrati tell you?

MARGARET. That he wasn't going to enter Badegast for the Ladies' Plate.

CLEMENT. Oh, you mustn't believe everything Szigrati tells you. He's spreading the report that Badegast won't run just in order that the odds may be longer.

MARGARET. Why, that's just like speculation.

CLEMENT. Well, don't you suppose we've got any speculators among us? For many men the whole thing is a business. Do you suppose a man like Szigrati has the slightest feeling for sport? He might just as well be on the stock exchange. But for the matter of that, as far as Badegast is concerned, people might well lay a hundred to one against him.

MARGARET. Oh? I thought he looked splendid this morning.

CLEMENT. Oh, she's seen Badegast too!

MARGARET. To be sure — didn't Butters give him a gallop this morning after Busserl?

CLEMENT. But Butters doesn't ride for Szigrati. That must have been a stable-boy. Well, anyhow, Badegast may look as splendid as you like, it makes no difference — he's no good. Ah, Margaret, with your brains you'll soon learn to distinguish real greatness from false. It's really incredible, the quickness with which you've already — what shall I say? — initiated yourself into all these things — it surpasses my boldest expectations.

MARGARET (*annoyed*). Why does it surpass your expectations? You know very well that all these things are not so new to me. Some very good people used to visit my parents' house — Count Libowski and various others; and also at my husband's . . .

CLEMENT. Oh, of course — I know . . . At bottom I've really got nothing against the cotton business.

MARGARET. What has it to do with my personal views that my husband had a cotton factory? I always continued my education in my own fashion. But let's not talk

any further about those days — they're far enough away, thank God!

CLEMENT. But there are others that are nearer.

MARGARET. To be sure. But what does that mean?

CLEMENT. Oh, I only mean that in your Munich surroundings you can't have heard much of sporting matters, as far as I am able to judge.

MARGARET. I wish you'd stop reproaching me with the surroundings in which you learned to know me.

CLEMENT. Reproaching you? There can't be any question of that. But it has always been and still is incomprehensible to me how you got in with those people.

MARGARET. You talk exactly as if they had been a gang of criminals!

CLEMENT. Child, I give you my word, there were some of them that looked exactly like highway-robbers. What I can't understand is how you, with your well-developed sense of . . . Well, I won't say anything more than your taste for . . . cleanliness and nice perfumes . . . could bear living among those people, sitting down at the table with them.

MARGARET (*smiling*). Didn't you do it too?

CLEMENT. I sat down near them — not with them. And you know it was for your sake, exclusively for your sake, that I did it. I won't deny that some of them improved on closer acquaintance; there were some really interesting people among them. And you mustn't get the idea, darling, that when I'm among ill-dressed people I have a feeling of conscious superiority. It's not that — but there's something in their whole bearing, in their very nature, that makes one nervous.

MARGARET. Oh, I think that's rather a sweeping statement.

CLEMENT. Now don't get offended with me, darling. I've just said there were some very interesting people among them. But how a *lady* can feel at home with them for any length of time, I shall never be able to understand.

MARGARET. You forget one thing, my dear Clement — that in a certain sense I belong to their circle, or did belong to it.

CLEMENT. You — I beg your pardon!

MARGARET. They were artists.

CLEMENT. Ah good — we're back on that subject again!

MARGARET. Yes — and that's the thing that always hurts me, that you can't feel with me there.

CLEMENT. "Can't feel with you" . . . I like that! I can feel with you all right — but you know what it was I always disliked about your scribbling, and you know that it's a very personal thing.

MARGARET. Well, there are women who in my situation at that time would have done worse things than write poetry.

CLEMENT. But such poetry! (*He picks up a little book on the mantelpiece.*) That's the whole question. I can assure you, every time I see it lying there, every-time I even think of it, I'm ashamed to think it's yours.

MARGARET. You simply don't understand it. No, you mustn't be vexed with me; if you had just that one thing more, you'd be perfect — and that probably is not to be. But what is it that disturbs you in the verses? You surely know that I haven't experienced anything like that.

CLEMENT. I hope not!

MARGARET. You know it's all imagination.

CLEMENT. But then I can't help asking myself . . . how comes a lady to have such an imagination? (*Reads.*)

"So, drunk with bliss, I hang upon thy neck
And suck thy lips' drained sweetness . . ."

(*Shakes his head.*) How can a lady write such stuff, or allow it to be printed? Everybody who reads it must call up a picture of the authoress and the neck and . . . the intoxication.

MARGARET. When I give you my word that such a neck has never existed . . .

CLEMENT. No, I can't believe that it has. Lucky for me that I can't — and . . . for you too, Margaret. But how did you ever come by such fancies? All these glowing emotions can't possibly be referred to your first husband — you told me yourself he never understood you.

MARGARET. Of course he didn't — that's why I got a divorce from him. You know all about that. I simply couldn't exist by the side of a man who had no ideas beyond eating and drinking and cotton.

CLEMENT. Yes, I know. But all that's three years ago — and you wrote the verses later.

MARGARET. Yes . . . But just think of the position in which I found myself . . .

CLEMENT. What sort of a position? You hadn't any privations to put up with, had you? From that point of view your husband, to give him his due, behaved really very well. You weren't forced to earn your own living. And even if they gave you a hundred florins for a poem — they certainly wouldn't give more — you weren't obliged to write a book like that.

MARGARET. Clement, dear, I didn't mean the word "position" in a material sense; I meant the position in which my soul was. Haven't you any conception . . .? When you first met me, it was much better — to a certain extent I had found myself; but at first . . .! I was so helpless and distracted. I did everything I could — I painted, I even gave English lessons in the boardinghouse where I was living. Just think what it was like, to be there as a divorced woman at twenty-two, to have no one . . .

CLEMENT. Why didn't you stay quietly in Vienna?

MARGARET. Because I was not on good terms with my family. No one has really understood me. Oh, these people . . .! Do you suppose any of my relations could conceive that one should want anything else from life except a husband and pretty clothes and a position

in society? Oh, good heavens . . .! If I had had a child, things might have been very different—and again they might not. I am a very complex creature. But after all, what have you to complain of? Wasn't my going to Munich the best thing I could have done? How else should I ever have known you?

CLEMENT. That's all right—but you didn't go there with that purpose in view.

MARGARET. I went because I wanted to be free—inwardly free. I wanted to see if I could make the thing go on my own resources. And you must admit that it looked as if I should be able to. I was on the road to becoming famous. (CLEMENT *looks at her dubiously.*) But I cared more for you than even for fame.

CLEMENT (*good-naturedly*). And I'm a bit more dependable.

MARGARET. I wasn't thinking about that. I loved you from the very first moment—that was the thing that counted. I had always dreamed of some one just like you; I had always known that no other sort of man could make me happy. Blood isn't a mere empty word; it's the only thing that counts. Do you know, that's why I always have a kind of idea . . .

CLEMENT. What?

MARGARET. At least now and then the thought comes to me that there may be some noble blood in my veins too.

CLEMENT. How so?

MARGARET. Well, it would be a possibility.

CLEMENT. I don't understand.

MARGARET. I told you that there used to be aristocratic visitors at my parents' house . . .

CLEMENT. Well, and if there were . . .?

MARGARET. Who knows . . .?

CLEMENT. Oh, I say, Margaret! How can you talk of such things?

MARGARET. Oh, when you're about one can never say what one thinks! That's the only thing the matter with you —if it weren't for that you'd be perfect. (*She*

nestles up to him.) I do love you so tremendously. The very first evening, when you came into the café with Wangenheim, I knew it at once—knew that you were the man for me. You know you strode in among those people like a being from another world.

CLEMENT. I hope so. And you, thank goodness, didn't look as if you belonged to that one. No . . . when I remember that crowd—the Russian girl, for example, who looked like a student with her close-cropped hair, only that she didn't wear the cap . . .

MARGARET. She's a very talented artist, the Baranzewich.

CLEMENT. I know—you showed her to me in the Pinakothek, standing on a ladder, copying pictures. And then the fellow with the Polish name . . .

MARGARET (*begins to recall the name*). Zrkd . . .

CLEMENT. Oh, don't bother—you won't need to pronounce it any more. Once he delivered a lecture in the café, when I was there, without seeming in the least embarrassed.

MARGARET. He's a great genius—you may take my word for it.

CLEMENT. Oh, of course—they're all great geniuses at the café. And then there was that insufferable cub . . .

MARGARET. Who?

CLEMENT. Oh, you know the fellow I mean—the one that was always making tactless remarks about the aristocracy.

MARGARET. Gilbert—you must mean Gilbert.

CLEMENT. That's the one. Of course I don't undertake to defend everybody in my station of life; there are clowns and boobies in every rank, even among poets, I've been told. But it's unmannerly of the fellow, one of us being there . . .

MARGARET. Oh, that was his way.

CLEMENT. I had to take myself sharply in hand, or I should have said something rude.

Permission Albert Langen, Munich

FROM OLAF GULBRANSSON'S "FAMOUS CONTEMPORARIES"

MARGARET. He was an interesting man for all that . . . yes. And besides—he was fearfully jealous of you.

CLEMENT. So I thought I noticed. (*Pause.*)

MARGARET. Oh, they were all jealous of you. Naturally . . . you were so different. And then they all paid court to me, just because they were all quite indifferent to me. You must have noticed that, too, didn't you? What are you laughing at?

CLEMENT. It's comical . . . If any one had prophesied to me that I should marry one of the crowd at the Café Maximilian! The ones I liked best were the two young painters—they were really just as if they'd stepped out of a farce at the theatre. You know, those two that looked so much alike, and shared everything together—I fancy even the Russian girl on the step-ladder.

MARGARET. I never troubled my head about such things.

CLEMENT. Those two must have been Jews, weren't they?

MARGARET. What makes you think so?

CLEMENT. Oh . . . because they were always cutting jokes—and then their pronunciation . . .

MARGARET. I think you might dispense with anti-Semitic remarks.

CLEMENT. Come, child, don't be so sensitive. I know you're half-Jewish. And really, you know, I've nothing against the Jews. I even had an instructor once, who put me through my Greek for my final exam. He *was* a Jew, if you like—and a splendid fellow. One meets all kinds of people . . . And I'm not sorry to have had a chance to see your Munich circle—it's all a bit of experience.—But, you admit, I must have appeared to you as a kind of life-saver.

MARGARET. Yes, indeed you did. Oh, Clement, Clement . . . ! (*She embraces him.*)

CLEMENT. What are you laughing at?

MARGARET. Oh, a thought struck me . . .

CLEMENT. Well . . . ?

MARGARET. "So, drunk with bliss, I hang upon thy neck . . ."

CLEMENT (*annoyed*). I don't know why you always have to spoil a fellow's illusions!

MARGARET. Tell me honestly, Clement—wouldn't you be proud if your girl—if your wife—were a great, famous authoress?

CLEMENT. I've told you already what I think. You may call me narrow if you like, but I assure you that if you began writing poems again, or, even more, having them printed, in which you gushed about me or told the world all about our happiness, there'd be an end of the marriage—I should be up and off.

MARGARET. And you say that—you, a man who has had a dozen notorious affairs!

CLEMENT. Notorious or not, my dear, *I* never told anybody about them; I never rushed into print when a girl hung, drunk with bliss, about my neck, so that anybody could buy it for a gulden and a half. That's the thing, you see. I know that there are people who get their living that way—but I don't consider it the thing to do. I tell you it seems worse to me than for a girl to show herself off in tights as a Greek statue at the Ronacher. At least she keeps her mouth shut—but the things that one of your poets blabs out, well, they're past a joke!

MARGARET (*uneasily*). Dearest, you forget that a poet doesn't always tell the truth. We tell things which we haven't experienced at all, but what we've dreamed, invented.

CLEMENT. My dear Margaret, I wish you wouldn't always keep saying "we." Thank heaven, you're out of that sort of thing now!

MARGARET. Who knows?

CLEMENT. What do you mean by that?

MARGARET (*tenderly*). Clem, I really must tell you?

CLEMENT. Why, what's up now?

MARGARET. Well, I'm not out of it—I haven't given up writing.

CLEMENT. You mean by that . . .?

MARGARET. Just what I say—that I'm still writing, or at least that I have written something. Yes, this impulse is stronger than other people can conceive. I believe I should have gone to pieces if I hadn't written.

CLEMENT. Well, what have you been writing this time?

MARGARET. A novel. I had too much in my breast that wanted to be said—I should have choked if I hadn't got it out. I haven't said anything about it before—but of course I had to tell you sooner or later. Künigel is delighted with it.

CLEMENT. Who is Künigel?

MARGARET. My publisher.

CLEMENT. Then somebody's read the thing already?

MARGARET. Yes—and many more will read it. Clement, you'll be proud—believe me!

CLEMENT. You're mistaken, my dear child. I think you have . . .Well, what sort of things have you put into it?

MARGARET. That's not so easy to explain in one word. The book contains, so to say, the best of what is to be said about things.

CLEMENT. Brava!

MARGARET. And so I am able to promise you that from this time on I shan't touch a pen. There's no more need.

CLEMENT. Margaret, do you love me or not?

MARGARET. How can you ask? I love you, and you alone. Much as I have seen, much as I have observed, I have felt nothing—I waited for you.

CLEMENT. Then bring it here, your novel.

MARGARET. Bring it here? How do you mean?

CLEMENT. That you felt you had to write it—may be; but at least no one shall read it. Bring it here—we'll throw it in the fire.

MARGARET. Clement . . .!

CLEMENT. I ask that much of you—I have a right to ask it.

MARGARET. Oh, it isn't possible! It's . . .

CLEMENT. Not possible? When I wish it—when I explain that I make everything else dependent on it . . . you understand me . . . it may perhaps turn out to be possible.

MARGARET. But, Clement, it's already printed.

CLEMENT. What—printed?

MARGARET. Yes . . . in a few days it'll be for sale everywhere.

CLEMENT. Margaret . . .! And all this without a word to me . . .

MARGARET. I couldn't help it, Clement. When you see it, you'll forgive me—more than that, you'll be proud of me.

CLEMENT. My dear girl, this is past a joke.

MARGARET. Clement . . .!

CLEMENT. Good-by, Margaret.

MARGARET. Clement . . .! What does this mean? You are going?

CLEMENT. As you see.

MARGARET. When will you be back?

CLEMENT. That I can't at the present moment say. Good-by.

MARGARET. Clement . . .! (*Tries to restrain him.*)

CLEMENT. If you please . . . [*Exit.*]

MARGARET (*alone*). Clement . . .! What does this mean? He's leaving me? Oh, what shall I do?—Clement!—Can he mean that all is over . . .? No—it's impossible! Clement! I must follow him . . . (*Looks about for her hat. The bell rings.*) Ah . . . he's coming back! He was only trying to frighten me . . . Oh, my Clement! (*Goes toward door. Enter* GILBERT.)

GILBERT (*to maid, who has opened door for him*). I told you I was sure she was at home. Good morning, Margaret.

MARGARET (*taken aback*). You . . .?

GILBERT. Yes, I—Amandus Gilbert.

MARGARET. I . . . I'm so surprised . . .

GILBERT. That is evident. But there's no reason why you should be. I am only passing through—I'm on my way to Italy. And really I've come to see you just for the purpose of bringing you a copy of my latest work in remembrance of our old friendship. (*Hands her the book. As she does not take it at once, he lays it on the table.*)

MARGARET. You're very kind . . . thank you.

GILBERT. Oh, not at all. You have a certain right to this book. So this is where you live . . .

MARGARET. Yes. But . . .

GILBERT. Oh, it's only temporary, I know. For furnished rooms they aren't bad. To be sure, these family portraits on the walls would drive me to distraction.

MARGARET. My landlady is the widow of a general.

GILBERT. Oh, you needn't apologize.

MARGARET. Apologize . . .? I wasn't thinking of it.

GILBERT. It's very queer, when one comes to think . . .

MARGARET. To think of what?

GILBERT. Why shouldn't I say it? Of the little room in the Steinsdorfer Strasse, with the balcony looking out on the Isar. Do you remember it, Margaret?

MARGARET. Do you think you'd better call me Margaret . . . now?

GILBERT. As you please . . . (*Pause. Suddenly.*) You know really you behaved very badly . . .

MARGARET. What?

GILBERT. Or do you prefer that I should speak in paraphrases? Unfortunately I can't find any other expression for your conduct. And it was all so unnecessary—it would have been just as well to be honest with me. There was nothing to be gained by stealing away from Munich in the dead of night.

MARGARET. It wasn't the dead of night—I left Munich by the express at 8.30 A. M., in bright sunshine.

GILBERT. Well, anyhow, you might just as well have said good-by, mightn't you? (*Sits.*)

MARGARET. The Baron may come in at any moment.

GILBERT. Well, what if he does? You surely haven't told him that once upon a time you lay in my arms and adored me. I am just an old acquaintance from Munich—and as such I have surely the right to call on you?

MARGARET. Any other old acquaintance—not you.

GILBERT. Why? You persist in misunderstanding me. I am really here only as an old acquaintance. Everything else is over—long ago over . . . Well, you'll see there. (*Points to his book.*)

MARGARET. What book is that?

GILBERT. My latest novel.

MARGARET. Oh, you're writing novels?

GILBERT. To be sure.

MARGARET. Since when have you risen to that?

GILBERT. What do you mean?

MARGARET. Oh, I remember that your real field was the small sketch, the observation of trivial daily occurrences . . .

GILBERT (*excitedly*). My field . . .? My field is the world! I write what I choose to write—I don't allow any bounds to be set to my genius. I don't know what should prevent me from writing a novel.

MARGARET. Well, the standard critics used to say . . .

GILBERT. What standard critic do you mean?

MARGARET. I remember, for example, a feuilleton of Neumann's in the *Allgemeine* . . .

GILBERT (*angrily*). Neumann is an idiot! I've given him a blow in the face.

MARGARET. You've given him . . .?

GILBERT. Oh, not literally . . . Margaret, you used to be as disgusted with him as I was—we agreed entirely in the view that Neumann was an idiot. "How can that mere cipher dare . . ."—those were your very words, Margaret, "How can he dare to set limits

to you — to strangle your next book before its birth?" That's what you said! And now you appeal to that charlatan!

MARGARET. Please don't shout so. My landlady . . .

GILBERT. I can't bother with thinking about generals' widows when my nerves are on edge.

MARGARET. But what did I say? I really can't understand your being so sensitive.

GILBERT. Sensitive? You call it being sensitive? You, who used to quiver from head to foot if the merest scribbler in the most obscure rag ventured to say a word of criticism!

MARGARET. I don't remember that ever any disparaging words have been written about me.

GILBERT. Oh . . . ? Well, you may be right. People are usually gallant to a pretty woman.

MARGARET. Gallant . . . ? So they used to praise my poems only out of gallantry? And your own verdict . . .

GILBERT. Mine . . . ? I needn't take back anything that I said — I may confine myself to remarking that your few really beautiful poems were written in *our* time.

MARGARET. And so you think the credit of them is really yours?

GILBERT. Would you have written them if I had never existed? Weren't they written to *me?*

MARGARET. No.

GILBERT. What? Not written to me? Oh, that's monstrous!

MARGARET. No, they were not written to you.

GILBERT. You take my breath away! Shall I remind you of the situations in which your finest verses had their origin?

MARGARET. They were addressed to an ideal . . . (GILBERT *points to himself.*) . . . whose earthly representative you happened to be.

GILBERT. Ha! That's fine! Where did you get it? Do you know what the French say in such circumstances? "That is literature!"

MARGARET (*imitating his tone*). "That is *not* literature!" That is the truth — the absolute truth. Or do you really believe that I meant you by the slender youth — that I sang hymns of praise to your locks? Even in those days you were . . . well, not slender; and I shouldn't call this locks. (*Passes her hand over his hair. Taking the opportunity, he seizes her hand and kisses it. In a softer voice.*) What are you thinking of?

GILBERT. You thought so in those days — or at least that was your name for it. Ah, what won't poets say for the sake of a smooth verse, a sounding rhyme? Didn't I call you once, in a sonnet, "my wise maiden?" And all the time you were neither . . . No, I mustn't be unjust to you — you *were* wise, confoundedly wise, revoltingly wise! And it has paid you. But one oughtn't to be surprised; you were always a snob at heart. Well, now you've got what you wanted. You caught your prey, your blue-blooded youth with the well-kept hands and the neglected brain, the splendid rider, fencer, shot, tennis-player, heart-breaker — Marlitt couldn't have invented anything more disgusting. What more do you want? Whether it will always content you, that knew something higher once, is of course another question. I can only say this one thing to you — in my eyes you are a renegade from love.

MARGARET. You thought that up in the train.

GILBERT. I thought it up just now — just a moment ago!

MARGARET. Write it down, then — it's good.

GILBERT. What was it that attracted you to a man of this sort? Nothing but the old instinct, the common instinct!

MARGARET. I don't think *you've* got any right . . .

GILBERT. My dear child, in the old days I had a soul too to offer you.

MARGARET. Oh, at times, only this . . .

GILBERT. Don't try now to depreciate our relation—you won't succeed. It will remain always your most splendid experience.

MARGARET. Bah . . . when I think that I tolerated that rubbish for a whole year!

GILBERT. Tolerated? You were entranced with it. Don't be ungrateful—I'm not. Miserably as you behaved at the last, for me it can't poison my memories. And anyhow, that was part of the whole.

MARGARET. You don't mean it!

GILBERT. Yes . . . And now listen to this one statement I owe to you: at the very time when you were beginning to turn away from me, when you felt this drawing toward the stable—*la nostalgie de l'écurie*—I was realizing that at heart I was done with you.

MARGARET. No . . .!

GILBERT. It's quite characteristic, Margaret, that you hadn't the least perception of it. Yes, I was done with you. I simply didn't need you any more. What you could give me, you had given me; you had fulfilled your function. You knew in the depths of your heart, you knew unconsciously . . . that your day was over. Our relation had achieved its purpose; I do not regret having loved you.

MARGARET. *I* do!

GILBERT. That's splendid! In that one small observation lies, for the connoisseur, the whole deep distinction between the true artist and the dilettante. To you, Margaret, our relation is today nothing more than the recollection of a few mad nights, a few deep talks of an evening in the alleys of the English Garden; I have made of it a work of art.

MARGARET. So have I.

GILBERT. How so? What do you mean?

MARGARET. What you've succeeded in doing, if you please, I've succeeded in doing too. I also have written a novel in which our former relations play a part, in which our former love—or what we called by that name—is preserved to eternity.

GILBERT. If I were in your place, I wouldn't say anything about eternity until the second edition was out.

MARGARET. Well, anyhow, it means something different when *I* write a novel from what it does when you write one.

GILBERT. Yes . . . ?

MARGARET. You see, you're a free man—you haven't got to steal the hours in which you can be an artist; and you don't risk your whole future.

GILBERT. Oh . . . do you?

MARGARET. I have! Half an hour ago Clement left me because I owned up to him that I had written a novel.

GILBERT. Left you? For ever?

MARGARET. I don't know. It is possible. He went away in anger. He is unaccountable—I can't tell beforehand what he will decide about me.

GILBERT. Ah . . . so he forbids you to write! He won't allow the girl he loves to make any use of her brains—oh, that's splendid! That's the fine flower of the nation! Ah . . . yes. And you—aren't you ashamed to experience the same sensations in the arms of such an idiot that you once . . .

MARGARET. I forbid you to talk like that about him! You don't understand him.

GILBERT. Ha . . . !

MARGARET. You don't know why he objects to my writing—it's only out of love. He feels that I live in a world which is closed to him; he blushes to see me exposing the innermost secrets of my soul to strangers. He wants me for himself, for himself alone. And that's why he rushed off . . . no, not rushed; Clement isn't the sort of person who rushes off . . .

Permission Albert Langen, Munich

Paul Heyse

From Olaf Gulbransson's "Famous Contemporaries".

GILBERT. An admirable bit of observation. But at any rate he's gone. We needn't discuss the tempo of his departure. And he's gone because he won't allow you to yield to your desire to create.

MARGARET. Oh, if he could only understand that! I could be the best, the truest, the noblest wife in the world, if the right man existed!

GILBERT. You admit by that expression that he isn't the right one.

MARGARET. I didn't say that!

GILBERT. I want you to realize that he is simply enslaving you, ruining you, seeking to crush your personality out of sheer egoism. Oh, think of the Margaret you were in the old days! Think of the freedom you had to develop your ego when you loved me! Think of the choice spirits who were your associates then, of the disciples who gathered round me and were your disciples too. Don't you sometimes long to be back again? Don't you sometimes think of the little room with the balcony . . . and the Isar flowing beneath the window . . . (*He seizes her hands and draws near to her.*)

MARGARET. O God . . . !

GILBERT. It can all be so again—it needn't be the Isar. I'll tell you what to do, Margaret. If he comes back, tell him that you have some important business to see to in Munich, and spend the time with me. Oh, Margaret, you're so lovely! We'll be happy once again, Margaret, as we used to be. You remember, don't you? (*Very close to her.*) "So, drunk with bliss, I hang upon thy neck . . ."

MARGARET (*retreats quickly from him*). Go—go! No . . . no . . . go, I tell you! You know I don't love you any more.

GILBERT. Oh, . . . h'm . . . Really? Well, then I can only beg your pardon. (*Pause.*) Good-by, Margaret . . . good-by.

MARGARET. Good-by.

GILBERT. Good-by . . . (*Turns back once more.*) Won't you at least, as a parting gift, let me have a copy of your novel? I gave you mine.

MARGARET. It isn't out yet—it won't be till next week.

GILBERT. If you don't mind telling me . . . what sort of a story is it?

MARGARET. It is the story of my life—of course disguised, so that no one can recognize me.

GILBERT. Oh . . .? How did you manage that?

MARGARET. It was quite simple. The heroine, to begin with, is not a writer but a painter . . .

GILBERT. Very clever of you.

MARGARET. Her first husband was not a cotton-manufacturer but a great speculator—and she deceived him not with a tenor . . .

GILBERT. Aha!

MARGARET. What are you laughing at?

GILBERT. So you deceived him with a tenor? That's something I didn't know.

MARGARET. How do you know I did?

GILBERT. Why, you've just informed me yourself.

MARGARET. I . . .? How? I said the heroine of my novel betrays her husband with a baritone.

GILBERT. A basso would have been grander—a mezzo-soprano more piquant.

MARGARET. Then she goes not to Munich but to Dresden, and there has a relation with a sculptor.

GILBERT. Myself, I suppose . . . disguised?

MARGARET. Oh, very much disguised. The sculptor is young, handsome, and a genius. In spite of all that, she leaves him.

GILBERT. For . . .?

MARGARET. Guess!

GILBERT. Presumably a jockey.

MARGARET. Silly!

GILBERT. A count, then? A prince?

MARGARET. No — an archduke!

GILBERT (*with a bow*). Ah, you've spared no expense.

MARGARET. Yes — an archduke, who abandons his position at court for her sake, marries her, and goes away with her to the Canary Islands.

GILBERT. The Canary Islands! That's fine. And then . . . ?

MARGARET. With their landing in . . .

GILBERT. . . . the Canaries . . .

MARGARET. . . . the novel ends.

GILBERT. Oh, I see . . . I'm very curious — especially about the disguise.

MARGARET. Even you would not be able to recognize me, if it were not . . .

GILBERT. Well . . . ?

MARGARET. If it were not that in the last chapter but two I've reproduced all our correspondence!

GILBERT. What?

MARGARET. Yes — all the letters you wrote me, and all those I wrote you are included.

GILBERT. Excuse me . . . but how did you get yours to me? I've got them all.

MARGARET. Ah, but I kept the rough drafts of them all.

GILBERT. Rough drafts?

MARGARET. Yes.

GILBERT. Rough drafts . . . ! Of those letters to me that seemed to be dashed off in quivering haste? "Just one word more, dearest, before I sleep — my eyes are closing already . . ." and then, when your eyes had quite closed, you wrote me off a fair copy?

MARGARET. Well, have you anything to complain of?

GILBERT. I might have suspected it. I suppose I ought to congratulate myself that they weren't borrowed from a Lover's Manual. Oh, how everything crumbles around me . . . the whole past is in ruins! She kept rough drafts of her letters!

MARGARET. You ought to be glad. Who knows whether my letters to you will not be the only thing people will remember about you?

GILBERT. But it's an extremely awkward situation for another reason . . .

MARGARET. What is that?

GILBERT (*points to his book*). You see, they're all in there too.

MARGARET. What? Where?

GILBERT. In my novel.

MARGARET. What's in your novel?

GILBERT. Our letters . . . yours and mine.

MARGARET. How did you get yours, then, since I have them? Ah, you see you wrote rough drafts too!

GILBERT. Oh no—I only made copies of them before I sent them to you. I didn't want them to be lost. There are some in the book that you never got; they were too good for you—you'd never have understood them.

MARGARET. For heaven's sake, is that true? (*Quickly turns over the leaves of* GILBERT'S *book.*) Yes, it is! Oh, it's just as if we told the whole world that we had . . . Oh, good gracious . . .! (*Excitedly turning over the leaves.*) You don't mean to tell me you put in the one I wrote you the morning after the first night . . .

GILBERT. Of course I did—it was really brilliant.

MARGARET. But that's too dreadful! It'll be a European scandal. And Clement . . . O heavens! I'm beginning to wish that he may not come back. I'm lost—and you with me! Wherever you go, he'll know how to find you—he'll shoot you down like a mad dog!

GILBERT (*puts his book in his pocket*). A comparison in very poor taste.

MARGARET. How came you by that insane idea? The letters of a woman whom you professed to love . . .! It's easy to see that you are no gentleman.

GILBERT. Oh, that's too amusing! Didn't you do exactly the same thing?

MARGARET. I am a woman.

GILBERT. You remember it now!

MARGARET. It is true — I have nothing to boast of over you. We are worthy of each other. Yes . . . Clement was right; we are worse than the women at the Ronacher who exhibit themselves in tights. Our most hidden bliss, our sorrows, all . . . given to the world . . . Bah! I loathe myself! Yes, we two belong together — Clement would be quite right to drive me from him. (*Suddenly.*) Come, Amandus!

GILBERT. What are you going to do?

MARGARET. I accept your proposal.

GILBERT. Proposal? What proposal?

MARGARET. I'll fly with you! (*Looks about for her hat and cloak.*)

GILBERT. What are you thinking of?

MARGARET (*very much excited, puts her hat on with decision*). It may all be as it was before — so you said just now. It needn't be the Isar . . . Well, I'm ready.

GILBERT. But this is perfectly crazy! Fly with me . . .? What would be the use of that? Didn't you say yourself that he would know how to find me wherever I went? If you were with me, he would find you too. It would be a great deal more sensible for each of us alone . . .

MARGARET. You wretch! Would you abandon me now? And a few minutes ago you were on your knees to me! Have you no shame?

GILBERT. What is there to be ashamed of? I am an ailing, nervous man . . . I am subject to moods . . . (MARGARET, *at window, utters a loud cry.*) What's the matter? What will the general's widow think of me?

MARGARET. There he is! He's coming!

GILBERT. In that case . . .

MARGARET. What—you're going?

GILBERT. I didn't come here with the intention of calling on the Baron.

MARGARET. He'll meet you on the stairs—that would be worse still! Stay where you are—I refuse to be the only victim.

GILBERT. Don't be a fool! Why are you trembling so? He can't have read both novels. Control yourself—take off your hat. Put your cloak away. (*Helps her to take her things off.*) If he finds you in this state, he'll be bound to suspect . . .

MARGARET. It's all one to me—as well now as later. I can't endure to wait for the horror—I'll tell him everything at once.

GILBERT. Everything?

MARGARET. Yes, as long as you're here. If I come out honestly and confess everything, he may forgive me.

GILBERT. And what about me? I have better things to do in the world than to allow myself to be shot down like a mad dog by a jealous baron! (*Bell rings.*)

MARGARET. There he is—there he is!

GILBERT. You won't say anything!

MARGARET. Yes, I mean to speak out.

GILBERT. Oh, you will, will you? Have a care, then! I'll sell my skin dearly.

MARGARET. What will you do?

GILBERT. I'll hurl such truths into his very face as no baron ever heard before. (*Enter* CLEMENT; *rather surprised at finding him, very cool and polite.*)

CLEMENT. Oh . . . Herr Gilbert, if I'm not mistaken?

GILBERT. Yes, Baron. Happening to pass this way on a journey to the south, I could not refrain from coming to pay my respects . . .

CLEMENT. Ah, I see . . . (*Pause.*) I'm afraid I have interrupted a conversation—I should be sorry to do that. Please don't let me be in the way.

GILBERT (*to* MARGARET). Ah . . . what *were* we talking about?

CLEMENT. Perhaps I may be able to assist your memory. In Munich you always used to be talking about your books . . .

GILBERT. Ah . . . precisely. As a matter of fact, I *was* speaking of my new novel . . .

CLEMENT. Oh . . . then please go on. It's quite possible to discuss literature with me — isn't it, Margaret? What is your novel? Naturalist? Symbolist? A chapter of experience?

GILBERT. Oh, in a certain sense we all write but of things we have lived.

CLEMENT. That's very interesting.

GILBERT. Even when one writes a Nero, it's absolutely indispensable that at least in his heart he shall have set fire to Rome . . .

CLEMENT. Of course.

GILBERT. Where else is one to get inspiration except from oneself? Where is one to find models except in the life around one? (MARGARET *is growing more and more uneasy.*)

CLEMENT. The trouble is that the model's consent is so seldom asked. I'm bound to say, if I were a woman, I shouldn't thank a man for telling the world . . . (*Sharply.*) In decent society we call that . . . compromising a woman.

GILBERT. I don't know whether I may include myself in "decent society" — but I call that doing honor to a woman.

CLEMENT. Oh!

GILBERT. The essential thing is to hit the mark. What, in the higher sense, does it matter whether a woman has been happy in one man's arms or another's?

CLEMENT. Herr Gilbert, I will call your attention to the fact that you are speaking in the presence of a lady!

GILBERT. I am speaking in the presence of an old comrade who may be supposed to share my views on these matters.

CLEMENT. Oh . . . !

MARGARET (*suddenly*). Clement . . . ! (*Throws herself at his feet.*) Clement . . . !

CLEMENT (*taken aback*). Really . . . really, Margaret!

MARGARET. Forgive me, Clement!

CLEMENT. But—Margaret . . . ! (*To* GILBERT.) It is extremely unpleasant for me, Herr Gilbert . . . Get up, Margaret—get up! It's all right. (MARGARET *looks up at him inquiringly.*) Yes—get up! (*She rises.*) It's all right—it's all settled. You may believe me when I tell you. All you've got to do is to telephone a single word to Künigel. I've arranged everything with him. We'll call it in—you agree to that?

GILBERT. What are you going to call in, may I ask? Her novel?

CLEMENT. Oh, you know about it? It would seem, Herr Gilbert, that the comradeship you speak of has been brought pretty well up to date.

GILBERT. Yes . . . There is really nothing for me to do but to ask your pardon. I am really in a very embarrassing position . . .

CLEMENT. I regret very much, Herr Gilbert, that you have been forced to be a spectator of a scene which I may almost describe as domestic . . .

GILBERT. Ah . . . well, I do not wish to intrude any further—I will wish you good day. May I, as a tangible token that all misunderstanding between us has been cleared up, as a feeble evidence of my good wishes, present you, Baron, with a copy of my latest novel?

CLEMENT. You are very kind, Herr Gilbert. I must own, to be sure, that German novels are not my pet weakness. Well, this is probably the last I shall read—or the next to the last . . .

MARGARET, GILBERT. The next to the last . . . ?

CLEMENT. Yes.

MARGARET. And the last to be . . . ?

CLEMENT. Yours, my dear. (*Takes a book from his pocket.*) You see, I begged Künigel for a single copy, in order to present it to you — or rather to both of us. (MARGARET *and* GILBERT *exchange distracted glances.*)

MARGARET. How good you are! (*Takes the book from him.*) Yes . . . that's it!

CLEMENT. We'll read it together.

MARGARET. No, Clement . . . no . . . I can't let you be so good! There . . . ! (*Throws the book into the fire.*) I don't want to hear any more of all that.

GILBERT (*delighted*). Oh, but . . . !

CLEMENT (*goes toward the chimney*). Margaret . . . ! What are you doing?

MARGARET (*stands in front of fire, throws her arms round* CLEMENT). *Now* will you believe that I love you?

GILBERT (*much relieved*). I think I am rather in the way . . . Good-by . . . good day, Baron . . . (*Aside.*) To think that I should have to miss a climax like that . . . ! [*Exit.*]

FRANK WEDEKIND

THE COURT SINGER

A Play in One Act

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Gerardo, *Imperial and Royal Court Singer*
Mrs. Helen Marowa
Professor Duhring
Miss Isabel Coburne
Muller, *hotel proprietor*
A valet
An elevator boy
A piano teacher

FRANK WEDEKIND

THE COURT SINGER (1900)

TRANSLATED BY ALBERT WILHELM BOESCHE, PH.D.
Assistant Professor of German, Cornell University

Scenery

Pretentiously furnished room in a hotel. Entrance from the corridor in the centre; also side doors. In front to the right a window with heavy closed curtains. To the left a grand piano. Behind the piano a Japanese screen covering the fireplace. Big open trunks are standing around. Enormous laurel wreaths on several upholstered armchairs. A mass of bouquets are distributed about the room, some of them being piled up on the piano.

Scene I

Valet de chambre. Immediately afterward an elevator boy.

VALET (*enters with an armful of clothes from the adjoining room, puts them into one of the big trunks. Knocks on the door; he straightens up*). Well?—Come in!

Enter an elevator boy.

BOY. There's a woman downstairs wants to know if Mr. Gerardo is in.

VALET. No, he isn't in. (*Exit elevator boy. Valet goes into the adjoining room, returns with another armful of clothes. Knock on the door. He lays the clothes aside and walks to the door.*) Well, who's this now? (*Opens the door, receives three or four large bouquets, comes forward with them and lays them carefully on the piano, then resumes packing. Another knock, he goes to the door, opens it, receives a batch of letters in all varieties of colors, comes forward and examines the addresses.*) "Mr. Gerardo."—"Courtsinger Gerardo."—"Monsieur Gerardo."—"Gerardo Esq."

Scene III

Gerardo (*alone, looking at his watch*). Half an hour left. (*Picks out the piano arrangement of "Tristan and Isolde" from under the flowers on the piano and, walking up and down, sings mezza voce:*)

"Isolde! Beloved! Art thou mine?
Once more my own? May I embrace thee?"

(*Clears his throat, strikes two thirds on the piano and begins anew:*)

"Isolde! Beloved! Art thou mine?
Once more my own? . . ."

(*Clears his throat.*) The air is simply infernal in here! (*Sings:*)

"Isolde! Beloved! . . ."

I feel as if there were a leaden weight on me! I must have a breath of fresh air, quick! (*Goes to the window and tries to find the cord by which to draw the curtain aside.*) Where can that thing be?—On the other side. There! (*Draws the curtain aside quickly and seeing* Miss Coeurne *before him, throws back his head in a sort of mild despair.*) Goodness gracious!

Scene IV

Miss Coeurne. Gerardo

Miss Coeurne (*sixteen years old, short skirts, loose-hanging light hair. Has a bouquet of red roses in her hand, speaks with an English accent, looks at* Gerardo *with a full and frank expression*). Please, do not send me away.

Gerardo. What else am I to do with you? Heaven knows *I* did not ask you to come here. It would be wrong of you to take it amiss but, you see, I have to sing tomorrow night. I must tell you frankly. I thought I should have this half hour to myself. Only just now I've given special and strictest orders not to admit anybody, no matter who it might be.

ISS COEURNE (*stepping forward*). Do not send me away. I heard you as Tannhäuser last night and came here merely to offer you these roses.

ERARDO. Yes?—Well?—And—?

ISS COEURNE. And myself!—I hope I am saying it right.

ERARDO (*grasps the back of a chair; after a short struggle with himself he shakes his head*). Who are you?

ISS COEURNE. Miss Coeurne.

ERARDO. I see.

ISS COEURNE. I am still quite a simple girl.

ERARDO. I know. But come here, Miss Coeurne. (*Sits down in an armchair and draws her up in front of him.*) Let me have a serious talk with you, such as you have never heard before in your young life but seem to need very much at the present time. Do you think because I am an artist—now don't misunderstand me, please. You are—how old are you?

ISS COEURNE. Twenty-two.

ERARDO. You are sixteen, at most seventeen. You make yourself several years older in order to appear more attractive to me. Well now? You are still quite simple, to be sure. But, as I was going to say, my being an artist certainly does not impose upon me the duty to help you to get over being simple! Don't take it amiss. Well? Why are you looking away now?

ISS COEURNE. I told you I was still very simple because that's the way they like to have young girls here in Germany.

ERARDO. I am not a German, my child, but at the same time . . .

ISS COEURNE. Well?—I am not so simple, after all.

ERARDO. I am no children's nurse either! That's not the right word, I feel it, for—you are no longer a child, unfortunately?

ISS COEURNE. No!—Unfortunately!—Not now.

GERARDO. But you see, my dear young woman—you have your games of tennis, you have your skating club, you may go bicycling or take mountain trips with your lady friends. You may enjoy yourself swimming or riding on horseback or dancing whichever you like. I am sure you have everything a young girl could wish for. Then why do you come to me?

MISS COEURNE. Because I hate all of that and because it's such a bore!

GERARDO. You are right; I won't dispute what you say. Indeed, you embarrass me. I myself, I must frankly confess, see something else in life. But, my child, I am a man and I am thirty-six years old. The time will come when you may likewise lay claim to a deeper and fuller life. Get two years older and, I am sure, the right one will turn up for you. Then it will not be necessary for you to come unasked to me, that is to say to one whom you do not know any more intimately than—all Europe knows him—and to conceal yourself behind the window curtains in order to get a taste of the higher life. (*Pause.* MISS COEURNE *breathes heavily.*) Well?—Let me thank you cordially and sincerely for your roses! (*Presses her hand.*) Will you be satisfied with that for today?

MISS COEURNE. As old as I am, I never yet gave a thought to a man until I saw you on the stage yesterday as Tannhäuser.—And I will promise you . . .

GERARDO. Oh please, child, don't promise me anything. How can a promise you might make at the present time be of any value to me? The disadvantage of it would be entirely yours. You see, my child, the most loving father could not speak more lovingly to you than I. Thank a kind providence for not having been delivered into some other artist's hands by your indiscretion. (*Presses her hand.*) Let it be a lesson to you for the rest of your life and be satisfied with that.

MISS COEURNE (*covering her face with her handkerchief, in an undertone, without tears*). Am I so ugly?

ERARDO. Ugly?—How does that make you ugly?—You are young and indiscreet! (*Rises nervously, walks over to the left, returns, puts his arm around her and takes her hand.*) Listen to me, my child! If I have to sing, if I am an artist by profession, how does that make you ugly? What an unreasonable inference: I am ugly, I am ugly. And yet it is the same wherever I go. Think of it! When I've only a few minutes left to catch the train, and tomorrow night it's Tristan . . .! Do not misunderstand me, but surely, my being a singer does not make it incumbent upon me to affirm the charm of your youthfulness and beauty. Does that make you ugly, my child? Make your appeal to other people who are not as hard-pressed as I am. Do you really think it would ever occur to me to say such a thing to you?

ISS COEURNE. To say it? No. But to think it.

ERARDO. Now, Miss Coeurne, let us be reasonable! Do not inquire into my thoughts about you. Really, at this moment they do not concern us in the least. I assure you, and please take my word for it as an artist, for I could not be more honest to you: I am unfortunately so constituted that I simply cannot bear to see any creature whatsoever suffer, not even the meanest. (*Looking at her critically, but with dignity.*) And for you, my child, I am sincerely sorry; I may say that much, after you have so far fought down your maidenly pride as to wait for me here. But please, Miss Coeurne, do take into account the life I have to lead. Just think of the mere question of time! At least two hundred, may be as many as three hundred charmingly attractive young girls of your age saw me on the stage yesterday in the part of Tannhäuser. Suppose now every one of these young girls expected as much of me as you do. What in the world would become of my singing? What would become of my voice? Just how could I keep up my profession?

(*She sinks into a chair, covers her face and weeps; he sits down on the armrest beside her, bends over her, sympathetically.*) It's really sinful of you, my child, to shed tears over being so young. Your whole life is still before you. Be patient. The thought of your youth should make you happy. How glad the rest of us would be — even if one lives the life of an artist like myself — to start over again from the very beginning. Please be not ungrateful for hearing me yesterday. Spare me this disconcerting sequel. Am I to blame for your falling in love with me? You are only one of many. My manager insists on my assuming this august manner on the stage. You see there's more to it than mere singing. I simply *have* to play the part of Tannhäuser that way. Now be good, my child. I have only a few moments left. Let me use them in preparing for tomorrow.

MISS COEURNE (*rises, dries her tears*). I cannot imagine another girl acting like me.

GERARDO (*manœuvering her to the door*). Quite right, my child . . .

MISS COEURNE (*gently resisting him, sobbing*). At least not — if . . .

GERARDO. If my valet were not guarding the door downstairs.

MISS COEURNE (*as above*). — if —

GERARDO. If she is as pretty and charmingly young as you.

MISS COEURNE (*as above*). — if —

GERARDO. If she has heard me just once as Tannhäuser.

MISS COEURNE (*sobbing again violently*). If she is as respectable as I!

GERARDO (*pointing to the grand piano*). Now, before you leave, take a look at those flowers. Let it be a warning to you, if you should ever feel tempted again to fall in love with a singer. Do you see, how fresh they are, all of them? I just let them fade and go to waste or give them to the porter. Then look at these letters.

(*Takes a handful from the tray.*) I know none of the ladies who have written them; don't you worry. I leave them to their fate. What else can I do? But, you may believe me, every one of your charming young friends is among them.

MISS COEURNE (*pleadingly*). Well, I won't hide myself a second time.—I won't do it again . . .

GERARDO. Really, my child, I haven't any more time. It's too bad, but I am about to leave town. I told you, did I not, that I am sorry for you? I really am, but my train is scheduled to leave in twenty-five minutes. So what more do you want?

MISS COEURNE. A kiss.

GERARDO (*standing up stiff and straight*). From me?

MISS COEURNE. Yes.

GERARDO (*putting his arm around her, dignified, but sympathetic*). You are desecrating art, my child. Do you really think it's for this that they are willing to pay my weight in gold? Get older first and learn to respect more highly the chaste goddess to whom I devote my life and labor.—You don't know whom I mean?

MISS COEURNE. No.

GERARDO. That's what I thought. Now, in order not to be inhuman, I will present you with my picture. Will you give me your word that after that you will leave me?

MISS COEURNE. Yes.

GERARDO. Very well, then. (*Walks back of the table to sign one of his photographs.*) Why don't you try to interest yourself in the operas themselves rather than in the men on the stage? You may find it to be a higher enjoyment, after all.

MISS COEURNE (*in an undertone*). I am too young.

GERARDO. Sacrifice yourself to music! (*Comes forward and hands her the photograph.*) You are too young, but—may be you'll succeed in spite of that. Do not

see in me the famous singer, but the unworthy tool in the hands of a master. Look around among the married women you know; all of them Wagnerians! Study his librettos, learn to feel each leitmotiv. That will keep you from committing indiscretions.

MISS COBURNE. I thank you.

GERARDO (*escorts her out into the hall, rings for the valet in passing through the door. Returns and picks up again the piano arrangement of "Tristan and Isolde;" walks to the right*). Come in!

SCENE V

GERARDO. VALET.

VALET (*panting and breathless*). Yes, Sir? Your orders?

GERARDO. Are you standing at the door downstairs?

VALET. Not at present, Sir.

GERARDO. I can see as much — simpleton! But you won't let anybody come up here, will you?

VALET. There were three ladies inquiring about you.

GERARDO. Don't you dare admit anybody, whatever they tell you.

VALET. Then there's another batch of letters.

GERARDO. Yes, never mind. (*Valet puts letter on tray.*) Don't you dare admit anybody!

VALET (*at the door*). Very well, Sir.

GERARDO. Not even, if they should offer you an annuity for life.

VALET. Very well, Sir. [*Exit.*]

SCENE VI

GERARDO.

GERARDO (*alone, tries to sing*). "Isolde! Beloved! Art thou . . ." I should think these women might get tired of me *some* time! But, then, the world holds so many of them! And I am only one. Well, everybody bears his yoke and has to bear it! (*Walks to the piano and strikes two thirds.*)

Permission Albert Langen, Munich

FROM OLAF GULBRANSSON'S "FAMOUS CONTEMPORARIES".

Scene VII

Gerardo. Professor Dühring. Later a piano teacher.

Professor Dühring, seventy years old, dressed in black, long, white beard, his aquiline nose tinged with red, suggesting fondness for wine, gold ringed spectacles, frock coat and silk hat, carries the score of an opera under his arm, enters without knocking.

Gerardo (*turning around*). What do you want?

Dühring. Mr. Gerardo, I—I have . . .

Gerardo. How did you get in here?

Dühring. I've been watching my chance for two hours down on the sidewalk, Mr. Gerardo.

Gerardo (*recollecting*). Let me see, you are . . .

Dühring. For fully two hours I've been standing down on the sidewalk. What else was I to do?

Gerardo. But, my dear sir, I haven't the time.

Dühring. I don't mean to play the whole opera to you now.

Gerardo. I haven't the time left . . .

Dühring. You haven't the time left! How about *me!* You are thirty. You have attained success in your art. You can continue following your bent through the whole long life that still is before you. I will ask you to listen only to your own part in my opera. You promised to do so when you came to town.

Gerardo. It's to no purpose, Sir. I am not my own master . . .

Dühring. Please, Mr. Gerardo! Please, please! Look at me, here's an old man lying before you on his knees who has known only one thing in life: his art. I know what you would reply to me, you, a young man who has been carried aloft on the wings of angels, one might say. "If you would have the goddess of Fortune find you, don't hunt for her." Do you imagine, when one has cherished but a single hope for fifty years, one could possibly have overlooked any means whatsoever within human reach, to attain that hope? First one turns cynical and then serious again. One

tries to get there by scheming, one is once more a light hearted child, and again an earnest seeker after one's artistic ideals — not for ambition's sake, not for conviction's sake, but simply because one cannot help it, because it's a curse which has been laid on one by a cruel omnipotence to which the life-long agony of its creature is a pleasing offering! A pleasing offering, I say, for we whom art enthralls rebel against our lot as little as does the slave of a woman against his seductress, as little as does the dog against his master who whips him.

GERARDO (*in despair*). I am powerless . . .

DÜHRING. Let me tell you, my dear Sir, the tyrants of antiquity who, as you know, would have their slaves tortured to death just for a pleasant pastime, they were mere children, they were harmless innocent little angels as compared with that divine providence which thought it was creating those tyrants in its own image.

GERARDO. While I quite comprehend you . . .

DÜHRING (*while* GERARDO *vainly tries several times to interrupt him; he follows* GERARDO *through the room and repeatedly blocks his attempt to reach the door*). You do not comprehend me. You cannot comprehend me. How could you have had the time to comprehend me! Fifty years of fruitless labor, Sir, that is more than you can comprehend, if one has been a favorite child of fortune like you. But I'll try to make you realize it approximately, at least. You see, I am too old to take my own life. The proper time to do that is at twenty-five, and I have missed my opportunity. I must live out my life now, my hand has grown too unsteady. But would you know what an old man like me *will* do? You ask me how I got in here. You have put your valet on guard at the hotel entrance. I did not try to slip by him, I've known for fifty years what he will tell me: the gentleman is not in. But with my score here I stood at the corner of the building for two

hours in the rain until he went up for a moment. Then I followed him, and while you were speaking to him in here, I concealed myself on the staircase—I need not tell you where. And then, when he had gone down again, I entered here. That's what a man of my years will do to reach one who might be his grandson. Please, Sir, please, let not this moment be without result for me even though it cost you a day, even though it cost you a whole week. It will be to your advantage as well as mine. A week ago, when you came to town on your starring tour, you promised me to let me play my opera to you; and since that time I've called every day. You either were rehearsing or had lady visitors. And now you are about to depart, which would mean that an old man like me in vain spent a whole week standing around in the street! And all it would cost you is a single word: "I will sing your Hermann." Then my opera will be performed. Then you will thank God for my intrusiveness, for—you sing "Siegfried," you sing "Florestan"—but you haven't in your repertory a more grateful part, one more adapted to a singer of your resources than that of "Hermann." Then with loud acclaim they will draw me out of my obscurity, and perhaps I'll have the opportunity of giving to the world at least a part of what I might have given, if it had not cast me out like a leper. But the great material gain resulting from my long struggle will not be mine, you alone will . . .

GERARDO (*having given up the attempt to stop his visitor, leans on the mantle piece of the fireplace. While drumming on the marble slab with his right hand, something behind the screen seems to excite his curiosity. He investigates, then suddenly reaches out and draws a piano teacher forward, dressed in gray. Holding her by the collar, with outstretched arm, he thus leads her forward in front of the piano and out*

through the centre door. Having locked the door, to DÜHRING). Please, don't let this interrupt you!

DÜHRING. You see, there are performed ten new operas every year which become impossible after the second night, and every ten years a good one which lives. Now this opera of mine *is* a good one, it is well adapted for the stage, it is sure to be a financial success. If you let me, I'll show you letters from Liszt, from Wagner, from Rubinstein, in which these men look up to me as to a superior being. And why has it remained unperformed to the present day? Because I don't stand in the public market-place. I tell you, it's like what will happen to a young girl who for three years has been the reigning beauty at all dancing parties, but has forgotten to become engaged. One has to give way to another generation. Besides you know our court theatres. They are fortresses, I can assure you, compared with which the armor-plate of Metz and Rastadt is the merest tin. They would rather dig out ten corpses than admit a single living composer. And it's in getting over these ramparts that I ask you to lend me a hand. You are inside at thirty, I am outside at seventy. It would cost you just a word to let me in, while I am vainly battering my head against stone and steel. That's why I have come to you (*very passionately*) and if you are not absolutely inhuman, if your success has not killed off in you the very last trace of sympathy with striving fellow-artists, you cannot refuse my request.

GERARDO. I will let you know a week from now. I will play your opera through. Let me take it along.

DÜHRING. I am too old for that, Mr. Gerardo. Long before a week, as measured by your chronology, has elapsed, I shall lie beneath the sod. I've been put off that way too often. (*Bringing down his fist on the piano.*) Hic Rhodus! Hic salta! It's five years ago now that I called on the manager of the Royal Theatre,

Count Zedlitz: "What have you got for me, my dearest professor?" "An opera, your Excellency." "Indeed, you have written a new opera? Splendid!" "Your Excellency, I have not written a new opera. It's an old opera. I wrote it thirteen years ago."—It wasn't this one here, it was my *Maria de Medicis.*—"But why don't you let us have it then? Why, we are just hunting for new works. We simply cannot shuffle through any longer, turning the old ones over and over. My secretary is traveling from one theatre to another, without finding anything, and you, who live right here, withhold your production from us in proud disdain of the common crowd!" "Your Excellency," I replied, "I am not withholding anything from anybody, Heaven is my witness. I submitted this opera to your predecessor, Count Tornow, thirteen years ago and had to go to his office myself three years later to get it back. Nobody had as much as looked at it." "Now just leave it here, my dear professor. A week from now at the latest you'll have our answer." And in saying this he pulls the score from under my arm and claps it into the lowest drawer and that's where it is lying today! That's where it is lying today, Sir! But what would I do, child that I am in spite of my white hair, but go home and tell my Gretchen: they need a new opera here at our theatre. Mine is practically accepted now! A year later death took her away from me,—and she was the one friend left who had been with me when I began to work on it. (*Sobs and dries his tears.*)

GERARDO. Sir, I cannot but feel the deepest sympathy for you . . .

DÜHRING. That's where it is lying today.

GERARDO. May be you actually are a child in spite of your white hair. I must confess I doubt if I can help you.

DÜHRING (*in violent rage*). So you can endure the sight of an old man dragging himself along beside you on

the same path on which your victorious flight carries you to the sun! Who knows but tomorrow you will lie on your knees before me and boast of knowing me, and today you see in the agonized groan of a creative artist nothing but a sad mistake and you cannot wring from your greed of gold the half hour it would take to rid me of the chains that are crushing me.

GERARDO. Sit down and play, sir! Come!

DÜHRING (*sits down at the piano, opens his score, and strikes two chords*). No, that's not the way it reads. I have to get back into it first. (*Strikes three chords, then turns several leaves.*) That is the overture; I won't detain you with it.—Now here comes the first scene . . . (*Strikes two chords.*) Here you stand at the deathbed of your father. Just a moment until I get my bearings . . .

GERARDO. Perhaps all you say is quite true. But at any rate you misjudge my position.

DÜHRING (*plays a confused orchestration and sings in a deep grating voice*).

Alas, now death has come to the castle
As it is raging in our huts.
It moweth down both great and small . . .

(*Interrupting himself.*) No, that's the chorus. I had thought of playing it to you because it's very good. Now comes your turn. (*Resumes the accompaniment and sings hoarsely:*)

My life unto this fateful hour
Was dim and gray like the breaking morn.
Tortured by demons, I roamed about.
My eye is tearless!
Oh let me kiss once more thy hoary hair!

(*Interrupting himself.*) Well? (*Since* GERARDO *does not answer, with violent irritation.*) These anæmic, threadbare, plodding, would-be geniuses who are puffing themselves up today! Whose technique is so sub-

lime, it makes them sterile, impotent at twenty! Meistersingers, philistines, that's what they are, whether they are starving or basking in the public favor. Fellows that go to the cookbook rather than to nature to satisfy their hunger. They think, indeed, they've learned her secret—naiveté! Ha—ha!—Tastes like plated brass!—They make art their starting-point rather than life! Write music for musicians rather than for yearning mankind! Blind, benighted ephemerons! Senile youths whom the sun of Wagner has dried and shriveled up! (*Seizing* GERARDO's *arm violently.*) To judge a man's creative genius, do you know where I take hold of him first?

GERARDO (*stepping back*). Well?

DÜHRING (*putting his right hand around his own left wrist and feeling his pulse*). This is where I take hold of him first of all. Do you see, right here! And if he hasn't anything here—please, let me go on playing. (*Turning more leaves.*) I won't go through the whole monologue. We shouldn't have the time anyway. Now here, scene three, end of the first act. That's where the farm laborer's child, who had grown up with you in the castle, suddenly enters. Now listen—after you have taken leave of your highly revered mother. (*Rapidly reading the text:*) Demon, who art thou? May one enter? (*To* GERARDO.) Those words are hers, you understand. (*Continues reading.*) Barbette! Yes, it is I. Is your father dead? There he lies! (*Plays and sings in the highest falsetto.*)

Full often did he stroke my curls.
Wherever he met me he was kind to me.
Alas, this is death,
His eyes are closed . . .

(*Interrupting himself, looking at* GERARDO *with self-assurance.*) Now isn't that music?

GERARDO. Possibly.

DÜHRING (*striking two chords*). Isn't that something more than the *Trumpeter of Säkkingen?*

GERARDO. Your confidence compels me to be candid. I cannot imagine how I could use my influence with any benefit to you.

DÜHRING. In other words you mean to tell me that it is antiquated music.

GERARDO. I would much rather call it modern music.

DÜHRING. Or modern music. Pardon my slip of the tongue, Mr. Gerardo. It's what will happen when one gets old. You see, one manager will write me: We cannot use your opera, it is antiquated music—and another writes: We cannot use it because it is modern music. In plain language both mean the same: We don't want any opera of yours, because as a composer *you don't count.*

GERARDO. I am a Wagner singer, Sir, I am no critic. If you want to see your opera performed, you had better apply to those who are paid for knowing what is good and what is bad. My judgment in such matters, don't doubt that for a moment, Sir, counts the less, the more I am recognized and esteemed as a singer.

DÜHRING. My dear Mr. Gerardo, you may rest assured, I don't believe in your judgment either. What do I care for your judgment! I think I know what to expect of a tenor. I am playing this opera to you to make you say: I'll sing your Hermann! I'll sing your Hermann!

GERARDO. It won't avail you anything. I must do what I am asked to do; I am bound by my contracts. You can afford to stand down in the street for a week. A day more or less makes no difference to you. But if *I* do not leave here by the next train, my prospects in this world are ruined. May be, in another world they will engage singers who break their contracts! My chains are drawn more tightly than the harness of a carriage horse. If anybody, even an absolute stranger, asks

me for material assistance he will find I have an open hand, although the sacrifice of happiness my calling exacts of me is not paid for with five hundred thousand francs a year. But if you ask of me the slightest assertion of personal liberty, you are expecting too much of a slave such as I am. I *can not* sing your Hermann as long as you don't count as a composer.

DÜHRING. Please, Sir, let me continue. It will give you a desire for the part.

GERARDO. If you but knew, Sir, how often I have a desire for things which I must deny myself and how often I must assume burdens for which I have not the least desire! I have absolutely no choice in the matter. You have been a free man all your life. How can you complain of not being in the market? Why don't you go and put yourself in the market?

DÜHRING. Oh, the haggling—the shouting—the meanness you meet with! I have tried it a hundred times.

GERARDO. One must do what one is capable of doing and not what one is incapable of doing.

DÜHRING. Everything has to be learned first.

GERARDO. One must learn that which one is capable of learning. How am I to know if the case is not very much the same with your work as a composer.

DÜHRING. I *am* a composer, Mr. Gerardo.

GERARDO. You mean by that, you have devoted your whole strength to the writing of operas.

DÜHRING. Quite so.

GERARDO. And you hadn't any left to bring about a performance.

DÜHRING. Quite so.

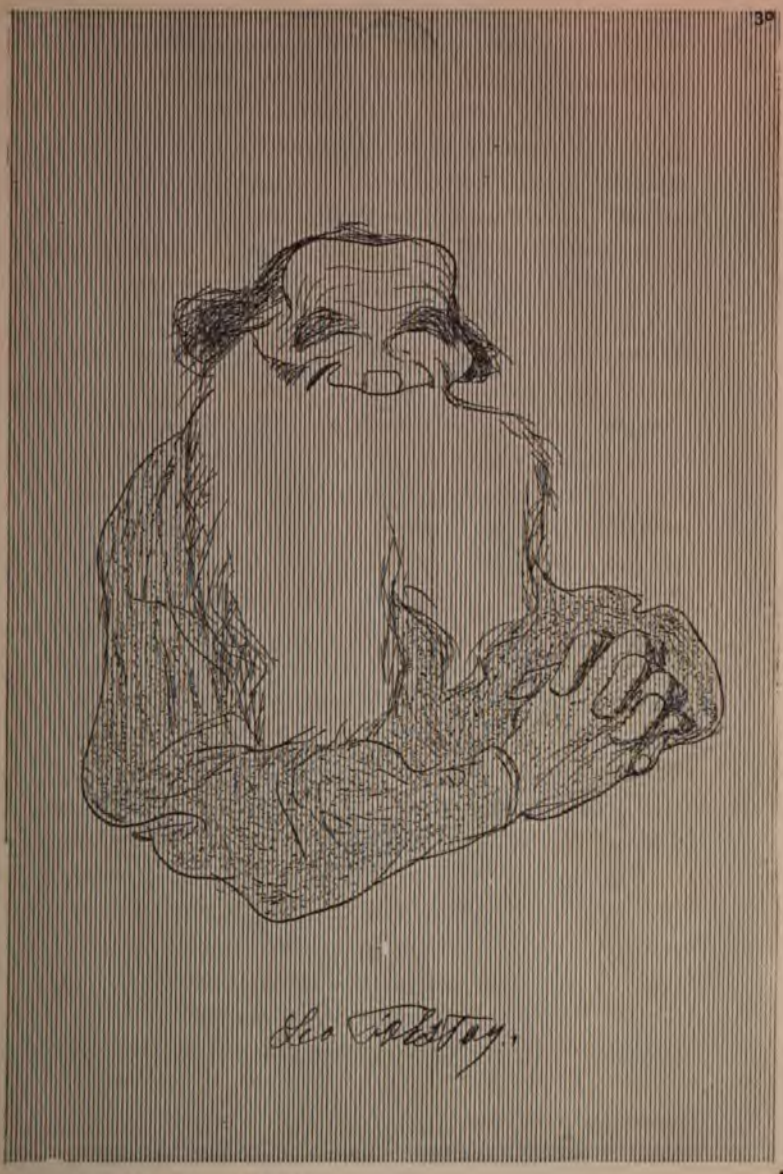
GERARDO. The composers whom I know go about it just the other way. They slap their operas on paper the best way they know and keep their strength for bringing about a performance.

DÜHRING. They are a type of composer I don't envy.

GERARDO. They would reciprocate that feeling, Sir. These people do count. One must be *something*. Name me a single famous man who did not *count!* If one is not a composer, one is something else, that's all, and there's no need of being unhappy about it, either. I was something else myself before I became a Wagner singer—something, my efficiency at which nobody could doubt, and with which I was entirely satisfied. It is not for *us* to say what we are intended for in this world. If it were, any Tom, Dick, or Harry might come along! Do you know what I was before they discovered me? I was a paperhanger's apprentice. Do you know what that is like? (*Indicating by gesture.*) I put paper on walls—with paste. I don't conceal my humble origin from anybody. Now just imagine, that as a paperhanger I should have taken it into my head to become a Wagner singer! Do you know what they would have done to me?

DÜHRING. They would have sent you to the madhouse.

GERARDO. Exactly, and rightly so. Whoever is dissatisfied with what he is will not get anywhere as long as he lives. A healthy man does that at which he is successful; if he fails, he chooses another calling. You spoke of the judgment of your friends. It does not take much to obtain expressions of approbation and admiration which do not cost those anything who utter them. Since my fifteenth year I have been paid for every labor I've performed and should have considered it a disgrace to be compelled to do something for nothing. Fifty years of fruitless struggling! Can anybody be so stubborn as not to have that convince him of the impossibility of his dreams! What did you get out of your life? You have sinfully wasted it! I have never striven for anything out of the ordinary; but, Sir, I can assure you of one thing: that since my earliest childhood days I have never had enough time left to stand out in the street for a



Permission Albert Langen, Munich

FROM OLAF GULBRANSSON'S "FAMOUS CONTEMPORARIES"

whole week. And if I were to think that in my old days I might be compelled to do that very thing—Sir, I am speaking only for myself now—but I cannot imagine how I could still muster the courage to look people in the face.

ÜHRING. What? With such an opera in your hands! Remember, I am not doing it for my own sake; I am doing it for art's sake.

ERARDO. You overestimate art. Let me tell you that art is something quite different from what people make themselves believe about it.

ÜHRING. I know nothing higher on earth!

ERARDO. That's a view shared only by people like yourself to whose interest it is to make this view prevail generally. We artists are merely one of bourgeoisie's luxuries in paying for which they will outbid each other. If you were right, how would an opera like *Walküre* be possible which deals with things the exposure of which is absolutely abhorrent to the public. Yet when *I* sing the part of Siegmund, the most solicitous mothers will not hesitate to bring in their thirteen or fourteen year old daughters. And indeed, as I am standing on the stage, I know for certain that not one person in the audience any longer pays the slightest attention to the action itself. If they did they would get up and out. That's what they actually did when the opera was still new. Now they have accustomed themselves to ignoring it. They notice it as little as they notice the air separating them from the stage. That, you see, is the meaning of what you call art! To this you have sacrificed fifty years of your life! Our real duty as artists is to produce ourselves to the paying public night after night under one pretense or another. Nor is its interest limited to such exhibitions; it fastens itself as tenaciously upon our private life. One belongs to the public with every breath one draws; and because we submit to this for money, people never know which they had better do most,

idolize us or despise us. Go and find out how many went to the theatre yesterday to hear me sing and how many came to gape at me as they would gape at the emperor of China if he were to come to town tomorrow. Do you know what the public is after in its pursuit of art? To shout bravos, to throw flowers and wreaths upon the stage, to have something to talk about, to be seen by others, to say Ah and Oh, once in a while to take a hand in unhitching a performer's horses—these are the public's real wants, and I satisfy them. If they pay me half a million, I in return furnish a living to a legion of cabmen, writers, milliners, florists, tavernkeepers. The money is made to circulate. People's blood is made to circulate. Young girls become engaged, old maids get married, wives fall victims to their husbands' friends, and grandmothers get no end of topics for gossip. Accidents and crimes are made to happen. At the ticket office a child is trampled to death, a lady is robbed of her pocketbook, a gentleman in the audience becomes insane during a performance. That creates business for physicians, lawyers . . . (*he is seized by a fit of coughing.*) And to think in this condition I am to sing Tristan tomorrow!—I am not telling you these things out of vanity but to cure you of your delusion. The standard by which to judge a man's importance in this world is the world itself and not some fixed conviction one may have acquired through years of brooding meditation. I did not put myself in the market either; they discovered me. There are no unappreciated, neglected geniuses. We are not the makers and masters of our own fate; man is born a slave!

DÜHRING (*who has been turning the leaves of his manuscript*). Please, before I go, let me play to you the first scene of the second act. It's laid in a park, you know, just like the famous picture: *Embarquement pour Cythère* . . .

GERARDO. But I told you I haven't the time! Besides what am I to gather from a few detached scenes?

DÜHRING (*slowly packing up his manuscript*). I am afraid, Mr. Gerardo, you are somewhat misjudging me. After all, I am not quite so unknown to the rest of the world as I am to you. My person and name are known. Wagner himself mentions me often enough in his writings. And let me tell you, if I die today, my works will be performed tomorrow. I am as sure of that as I know that my music will retain its value. My Berlin publisher writes me every day: All that's needed is for you to die. Why then in the world don't you?

GERARDO. All I can reply to you is this: that since Wagner's death there hasn't been a call for new operas anywhere. If you offer new music, you have all conservatories, all singers and the whole public against you from the start. If you want to see your works performed, write a music which does not differ the least from what is in vogue today; just copy; steal your opera in bits and scraps from the whole of Wagner's operas. Then you may count with considerable probability on having it accepted. My tremendous hit last night should prove to you that the old music is all that's needed for years to come. And my opinion is that of every other singer, of every manager and of the whole paying public. Why should I go out of my way to have a new music whipped into me when the old music has already cost me such inhuman whippings?

DÜHRING (*offers him his trembling hand*). I am sorry but I fear I'm too old to learn to steal. That's the kind of thing one has to begin young or one will never learn.

GERARDO. I hope I haven't offended you, Sir.—But, my dear Sir,—if you would permit me—the thought that life means a hard struggle to you—(*speaking very rapidly*) it so happens that I have received five hundred marks more than I . . .

DÜHRING (*looks at* GERARDO *with his eyes wide open, then suddenly starts for the door*). Please, please, I beg of you, no! Don't finish what you meant to say. No, no, no! That is not what I came for. You know what a great sage has said:—They are all of them good-natured, but . . . !—No, Mr. Gerardo, I did not ask you to listen to my opera in order to practise extortion on you. I love my child too much for that. No indeed, Mr. Gerardo . . .

[*Exit through the centre door.*]

GERARDO (*escorting him to the door*). Oh please, Sir.—Happy to have known you, Sir.

SCENE VIII

GERARDO (*alone, comes forward, sinks into an armchair, with basket of champagne in front of him, looks at the bottles*). For whom am I raking together so much money?—For my children? Yes, if I had any children!—For my old age?—Two more years will make a wreck of me!—Then it will be:

"Alas, alas,
The hobby is forgotten!"

SCENE IX

GERARDO, HELEN MAROWA, later the valet.

HELEN (*of striking beauty, twenty-seven years, street dress, muff; greatly excited*). I am just likely, am I not, to let that creature block my way! I suppose you placed him down there to prevent me from reaching you!

GERARDO (*has started from his chair*). Helen!

HELEN. Why, you knew that I was coming, didn't you?

VALET (*in the open door which has been left so by* HELEN; *holds hand to his cheek*). I did my very best, Sir, but the lady . . . she . . . she . . .

HELEN. Boxed your ears!

GERARDO. Helen!

HELEN. Would you expect me to put up with such an insult?

GERARDO (*to the valet*). You may go. [*Exit* VALET.]

HELEN (*lays her muff on a chair*). I can no longer live without you. Either you will take me along or I shall kill myself.

GERARDO. Helen!

HELEN. I shall kill myself! You cut asunder my vital nerve if you insist on our separation. You leave me without either heart or brain. To live through another day like yesterday, a whole day without seeing you,—I simply cannot do it. I am not strong enough for it. I implore you, Oscar, take me along! I am pleading for my life!

GERARDO. It is impossible.

HELEN. Nothing is impossible if you are but willing! How can you say it is impossible? It *is* impossible for you to leave me without killing me. These are no empty words, I do not mean it as a threat; it is the simple truth! I am as certain of it as I can feel my own heart in here: not to have you means death to me. Therefore take me along. If not for my sake, do it for human mercy's sake! Let it be for only a short time, I don't care.

GERARDO. I give you my word of honor, Helen, I cannot do it.—I give you my word of honor.

HELEN. You must do it, Oscar! Whether you can or not, you must bear the consequences of your own acts. My life is dear to me, but you and my life are one. Take me with you, Oscar, unless you want to shed my blood!

GERARDO. Do you remember what I told you the very first day within these four walls?

HELEN. I do. But of what good is that to me now?

GERARDO. That there could be no thought of any real sentiment in our relations?

HELEN. Of what good is that to me now? Did I know you then? Why, I did not know what a man could be like until I knew you! You foresaw it would come to this or you would not have begun by exacting from me that promise not to make a scene at your departure. Besides do you think there is anything I should not have promised you if you had asked me to? That promise means my death. You will have cheated me out of my life if you go and leave me!

GERARDO. I cannot take you with me!

HELEN. Good Heavens, didn't I know that you would say that! Didn't I know before coming here! It's such a matter of course! You tell every one of them so. And why am I better than they! I am one of a hundred. There are a million women as good as I. I needn't be told, I *know*.—But I am ill, Oscar! I am sick unto death! I am love-sick! I am nearer to death than to life! That is your work, and you can save me without sacrificing anything, without assuming a burden. Tell me, why can you not?

GERARDO (*emphasizing every word*). Because my contract does not allow me either to marry or to travel in the company of ladies.

HELEN (*perplexed*). What is to prevent you?

GERARDO. My contract.

HELEN. You are not allowed to . . .?

GERARDO. I am not allowed to marry until my contract has expired.

HELEN. And you are not allowed to . . .?

GERARDO. I am not allowed to travel in the company of ladies.

HELEN. That's incomprehensible to me. Whom in the world does it concern?

GERARDO. It concerns my manager.

HELEN. Your manager?—What business is it of his?

GERARDO. It is his *business*.

HELEN. Perhaps because it might affect your voice?

GERARDO. Yes.

HELEN. Why, that's childish!—*Does* it affect your voice?

GERARDO. It does not.

HELEN. Does your manager believe such nonsense?

GERARDO. No, he does not believe it.

HELEN. That's incomprehensible to me. I don't understand how a—respectable man can sign such a contract!

GERARDO. My rights as a man are only a secondary consideration. I am an artist in the first place.

HELEN. Yes, you are. A great artist! An eminent artist! Don't you comprehend how I must love you? Is that the only thing your great mind cannot comprehend? All that makes me appear contemptible now in my relation to you is due to just this, that I see in you the only man who has ever made me feel his superiority to me and whom it has been my sole thought to win. I have clenched my teeth to keep from betraying to you what you are to me for fear you might weary of me. But my experience of yesterday has left me in a state of mind which no woman can endure. If I did not love you so madly, Oscar, you would think more of me. That is so terrible in you that you must despise the woman whose whole world you are. Of what I formerly was to myself there is not a trace left. And now that your passion has left me a burned-out shell, would you leave me here? You are taking my life with you, Oscar! Then take with you as well this flesh and blood which has been yours, or it will perish!

GERARDO. Helen . . .!

HELEN. Contracts! What are contracts to you! Why, there's not a contract made that one cannot get around in some way! What do people make contracts for? Don't use your contract as a weapon with which to murder me. I am not afraid of your contracts! Let me go with you, Oscar! We'll see if he as much as

mentions a breach of contract. He won't do it or I am a poor judge of human nature. And if he does object, it will still be time for me to die.

GERARDO. But we have no right to possess each other, Helen! You are as little free to follow me as I am to assume such a responsibility. I do not belong to myself; I belong to my art . . .

HELEN. Oh don't talk to me of your art! What do I care for your art. I've clung to your art merely to attract your attention. Did Heaven create a man like you to let you make a clown of yourself night after night? Are you not ashamed of boasting of it? You see that I am willing to overlook your being an artist. What wouldn't one overlook in a demigod like you? And if you were a convict, Oscar, I could not feel differently toward you. I have lost all control over myself! I should still lie in the dust before you as I am doing now! I should still implore your mercy as I am doing now! My own self would still be abandoned to you as it is now! I should still be facing death as I am now!

GERARDO (*laughing*). Why, Helen, you and facing death! Women so richly endowed for the enjoyment of life as you are do not kill themselves. You know the value of life better than I. You are too happily constituted to cast it away. That is left for others to do—for stunted and dwarfed creatures, the stepchildren of nature.

HELEN. Oscar, I did not say that I was going to shoot myself. When did I say that? How could I summon the courage? I say that I shall die if you do not take me with you just as one might die of any ailment because I can live only if I am with you! I can live without anything else—without home, without children, but not without you, Oscar! I can *not* live without *you!*

GERARDO (*uneasy*). Helen—if you do not calm yourself now, you will force me to do something terrible! I have just ten minutes left. The scene you are making here won't be accepted as a legal excuse for my breaking my contract! No court would regard your excited state of mind as a sufficient justification. I have ten more minutes to give you. If by that time you have not calmed yourself, Helen—then I cannot leave you to yourself!

HELEN. Oh let the whole world see me lie here!

GERARDO. Consider what you will risk!

HELEN. As if I had anything left to risk!

GERARDO. You might lose your social position.

HELEN. All I can lose is you!

GERARDO. What about those to whom you belong?

HELEN. I can now belong to no one but you!

GERARDO. But I do not belong to you!

HELEN. I've nothing left to lose but life itself.

GERARDO. How about your children?

HELEN (*flaring up*). Who took me away from them, Oscar! Who robbed my children of their mother!

GERARDO. Did I make advances to *you?*

HELEN (*with intense passion*). No, no! Don't think that for a moment! I just threw myself at you and should throw myself at you again today! No husband, no children could restrain me! If I die, I have at least tasted life! Through you, Oscar! I owe it to you that I have come to know myself! I have to thank you for it, Oscar!

GERARDO. Helen—now listen to me calmly . . .

HELEN. Yes, yes—there are ten minutes left . . .

GERARDO. Listen to me calmly . . . (*Both sit down on the sofa.*)

HELEN (*staring at him*). I have to thank you for it . . .

GERARDO. Helen—

HELEN. I don't ask you to love me. If I may but breathe the same air with you . . .!

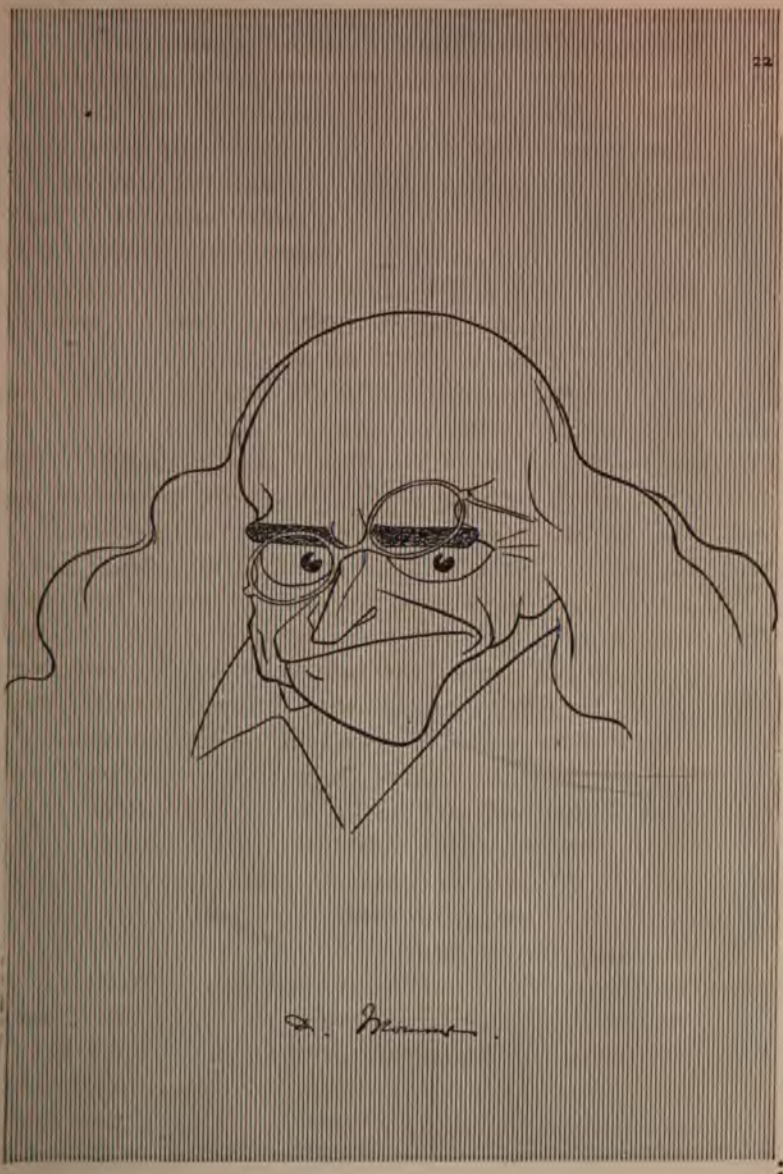
GERARDO (*struggling to preserve his composure*). Helen—to a man like me the conventional rules of life cannot be applied. I have known society women in all the lands of Europe. They have made me scenes, too, when it was time for me to leave—but when it came to choosing, I always knew what I owed to my position. Never yet have I met with such an outburst of passion as yours. Helen—I am tempted every day to withdraw to some idyllic Arcadia with this or that woman. But one has his duty to perform; you as well as I; and duty is the highest law . . .

HELEN. I think I know better by this time, Oscar, what is the highest law.

GERARDO. Well, what is it? Not your love, I hope? That's what every woman says! Whatever a woman wants to carry through she calls good, and if anybody refuses to yield to her then he is bad. That's what our fool playwrights have done for us. In order to draw full houses they put the world upside down and call it great-souled if a woman sacrifices her children and her family to indulge her senses. I should like to live like a turtledove, too. But as long as I have been in this world I have first obeyed my duty. If after that the opportunity offered, then, to be sure, I've enjoyed life to the full. But if one does not follow one's duty, one has no right to make the least claims on others.

HELEN (*looking away; abstractedly*). That will not bring the dead to life again . . .

GERARDO (*nervously*). Why, Helen, don't you see, I want to give back your life to you! I want to give back to you what you have sacrificed to me. Take it, I implore you! Don't make more of it than it is! Helen, how can a woman so disgracefully humiliate herself! What has become of your pride? With what contempt would you have shown me my proper place if I had fallen in love with you, if it had occurred to me to be jealous! What am I in the eyes of the society in which



Permission Albert Langen, Munich

FROM OLAF GULBRANSSON'S "FAMOUS CONTEMPORARIES"

you move! A man who makes a clown of himself! Would you fling away your life for a man whom a hundred women have loved before you, whom a hundred women will love after you without allowing it to cause them a moment of distress! Do you want your flowing blood to make you ridiculous in the sight of God and man?

HELEN (*looking away*). I know very well that I am asking an unheard-of thing of you but—what else can I do . . .

GERARDO (*soothingly*). I have given you all that's in my power to give. Even to a princess I could not be more than I have been to you. If there is one thing further our relations, if continued, might mean to you, it could only be the utter ruin of your life. Now release me, Helen! I understand how hard you find it, but—one often fears one is going to die. I myself often tremble for my life—art as a profession is so likely to unstring one's nerves. It's astonishing how soon one will get over that kind of thing. Resign yourself to the fortuitousness of life. We did not seek one another because we loved each other; we loved each other because we happened to find one another! (*Shrugging his shoulders.*) You say I must bear the consequences of my acts, Helen. Would you in all seriousness think ill of me now for not refusing you admittance when you came under the pretext of having me pass on your voice? I dare say you think too highly of your personal advantages for that; you know yourself too well; you are too proud of your beauty. Tell me, were you not absolutely certain of victory when you came?

HELEN (*looking away*). Oh, what was I a week ago! And what—what am I now!

GERARDO (*in a matter-of-fact way*). Helen, ask yourself this question: what choice is left to a man in such a case? You are generally known as the most beautiful woman in this city. Now shall I, an artist, allow

myself to acquire the reputation of an unsociable lout who shuts himself up in his four walls and denies himself to all visitors? The second possibility would be to receive you while at the same time pretending not to understand you. That would give me the wholly undeserved reputation of a simpleton. Third possibility — but this is extremely dangerous — I explain to you calmly and politely the very thing I am saying to you now. But that is very dangerous! For apart from your immediately giving me an insulting reply, calling me a vain conceited fool, it would, if it became known, make me appear in a most curious light. And what would at best be the result of my refusing the honor offered me? That you would make of me a contemptible helpless puppet, a target for your feminine wit, a booby whom you could tease and taunt as much as you liked, whom you could torment and put on the rack until you had driven him mad. (*He has risen from the sofa.*) Say yourself, Helen; what choice was left to me? (*She stares at him, then turns her eyes about helplessly, shudders and struggles for an answer.*) In such a case I face just this alternative: — to make an enemy who despises me or — to make an enemy who at least respects me. And (*stroking her hair*) Helen! — one does not care to be despised by a woman of such universally recognized beauty. Now does your pride still permit you to ask me to take you with me?

HELEN (*weeping profusely*). Oh God, oh God, oh God, oh God . . .

GERARDO. Your social position gave you the opportunity to make advances to me. You availed yourself of it.— I am the last person to think ill of you for that. But no more should you think ill of me for wishing to maintain my rights. No man could be franker with a woman than I have been with you. I told you that there could be no thought of any sentimentalities between you and me. I told you that my profession

prevented me from binding myself. I told you that my engagement in this city would end today . . .

HELEN (*rising*). Oh how my head rings! It's just words, words, words I hear! But I (*putting her hands to her heart and throat*) am choking here and choking here! Oscar—matters are worse than you realize! A woman such as I am more or less in the world—I have given life to two children. What would you say, Oscar . . . what would you say if tomorrow I should go and make another man as happy as you have been with me? What would you say then, Oscar?—Speak!—Speak!

GERARDO. What I should say? Just nothing. (*Looking at his watch.*) Helen . . .

HELEN. Oscar!—(*On her knees.*) I am imploring you for my life! For my life! It's the last time I shall ask you for it! Demand anything of me! But not that! Don't ask my life! You don't know what you are doing! You are mad! You are beside yourself! It's the last time! You detest me because I love you! Let not these minutes pass!—Save me! Save me!

GERARDO (*pulls her up in spite of her*). Now listen to a kind word!—Listen to a—kind—word . . .

HELEN (*in an undertone*). So it must be!

GERARDO. Helen—how old are your children?

HELEN. One is six and the other four.

GERARDO. Both girls?

HELEN. No.

GERARDO. The one four years old is a boy?

HELEN. Yes.

GERARDO. And the younger one a girl?

HELEN. No.

GERARDO. Both boys?

HELEN. Yes.

GERARDO. Have you no pity for them?

HELEN. No.

GERARDO. How happy I should be if they were mine!—Helen—would you give them to me?

HELEN. Yes.

GERARDO (*half jokingly*). Suppose I should be as unreasonable as you — taking it into my head that I am in love with some particular woman and can love no other! I cannot marry her. I cannot take her with me. Yet I must leave. Just what would that lead me to?

HELEN (*from now on growing constantly calmer*). Yes, yes. — Certainly. — I understand.

GERARDO. Believe me, Helen, there are any number of men in this world like me. The very way you and I have met ought to teach you something. You say you cannot live without me. How many men do you know? The more you will come to know the lower you will rate them. Then you won't think again of taking your life for a man's sake. You will have no higher opinion of them than I have of women.

HELEN. You think I am just like you. I am not.

GERARDO. I am quite serious, Helen. Nobody loves just one particular person unless he does not know any other. Everybody loves his own kind and can find it anywhere when he has once learned how to go about it.

HELEN (*smiling*). And when one has met one's kind, one is always sure of having one's love returned?

GERARDO (*drawing her down on the sofa*). You have no right, Helen, to complain of your husband! Why did you not know yourself better! Every young girl is free to choose for herself. There is no power on earth that could compel a girl to belong to a man whom she doesn't like. No such violence can be done to woman's rights. That's a kind of nonsense those women would like to make the world believe who having sold themselves for some material advantage or other would prefer to escape their obligations.

HELEN (*smiling*). Which would be a breach of contract, I suppose.

GERARDO. If *I* sell myself, they are at least dealing with an honest man!

HELEN (*smiling*). Then one who loves is not honest?

GERARDO. No!—Love is a distinctly philistine virtue. Love is sought by those who do not venture out into the world, who fear a comparison with others, who haven't the courage to face a fair trial of strength. Love is sought by every miserable rhymester who cannot live without being idolized by some one. Love is sought by the peasant who yokes his wife together with his ox to his plow. Love is a refuge for mollycoddles and cowards!—In the great world in which I live everybody is recognized for what he is actually worth. If two join together, they know exactly what to think of one another and need no love for it.

HELEN (*once more in a pleading tone*). Will you not introduce me into that great world of yours?

GERARDO. Helen—would you sacrifice your own happiness and that of your family for a fleeting pleasure?

HELEN. No.

GERARDO. Do you promise me to return to your family without show of reluctance?

HELEN. Yes.

GERARDO. And that you will not die, not even as one might die of some ailment?

HELEN. Yes.

GERARDO. Do you really promise me?

HELEN. Yes.

GERARDO. That you will be true to your duties as a mother—and as a wife?

HELEN. Yes.

GERARDO. Helen!

HELEN. Yes!—What more do you want!—I promise you.

GERARDO. That I may leave town without fear?

HELEN (*rising*). Yes.

GERARDO. Now shall we kiss each other once more?

HELEN. Yes—yes—yes—yes—yes—yes . . .

GERARDO (*after kissing her in a perfunctory manner*). A year from now, Helen, I shall sing again in this town.

HELEN. A year from now!—Yes, to be sure.

GERARDO (*affectedly sentimental*). Helen! (HELEN *presses his hand, takes her muff from the chair, pulls from it a revolver, shoots herself in the head and sinks to the floor.*) Helen! (*He totters forward, then backward and sinks into an armchair.*) Helen! (*Pause.*)

SCENE X

Same as before. The elevator boy. Two chambermaids. A scrubwoman. MÜLLER, proprietor of the hotel. The valet.

ELEVATOR BOY (*enters, looks at* GERARDO *and at* HELEN). Mr.—Mr. Gerardo! (GERARDO *does not move. Boy steps up to* HELEN. *Two chambermaids and a scrubwoman, scrubber in hand, edge their way in hesitatively and step up to* HELEN.)

SCRUBWOMAN (*after a pause*). She's still alive.

GERARDO (*jumps up, rushes to the door and runs into the proprietor. Pulls him forward*). Send for the police! I must be arrested! If I leave now, I am a brute and if I remain, I am ruined, for it would be a breach of contract. (*Looking at his watch.*) I still have a minute and ten seconds left. Quick! I must be arrested within that time!

MÜLLER. Fritz, get the nearest policeman!

ELEVATOR BOY. Yes, Sir!

MÜLLER. Run as fast as you can! (*Exit elevator boy. To* GERARDO.) Don't let it upset you, Mr. Gerardo. That kind of thing is an old story with us here.

GERARDO (*kneels down beside* HELEN, *takes her hand*). Helen! She's still alive! She's still alive! (*To* MÜLLER.) If I am arrested, it counts as a legal excuse. How about my trunks?—Is the carriage at the door?

MÜLLER. Has been there the last twenty minutes, Sir. (*Goes to the door and lets in the valet who carries down one of the trunks.*)

GERARDO (*bending over* HELEN). Helen!—(*In an undertone.*) It can't hurt me professionally. (*To* MÜLLER.) Haven't you sent for a physician yet?

MÜLLER. The doctor has been 'phoned to at once. Will be here in just a minute, I am sure.

GERARDO (*putting his arms under* HELEN'S *and half raising her*). Helen!—Don't you recognize me, Helen?—Come now, the physician will be here in just a moment!—Your Oscar, Helen!—Helen!

ELEVATOR BOY (*in the open door*). Can't find a policeman anywhere!

GERARDO (*forgets everything, jumps up, lets* HELEN *fall back to the floor*). I must sing "Tristan" tomorrow! (*Colliding with several pieces of furniture, he rushes out through the centre door.*)

ERNST HARDT

TRISTRAM THE JESTER*

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

MARK, *King of Cornwall*
ISEULT *of Ireland* (MARK'S *wife*)
BRANGAENE, ISEULT'S *lady*
GIMELLA, ISEULT'S *lady*
PARANIS, ISEULT'S *page*
DUKE DENOVALIN
SIR DINAS *of Lidan*
SIR GANELUN
UGRIN, MARK'S *jester*
STRANGE JESTER, *disguise of* TRISTRAM *of Lyonesse*
STRANGE LEPER, *disguise of* TRISTRAM *of Lyonesse*

Also five Gaelic Barons. IWEIN, *the King of the Lepers. The Lepers of Lubin, a Herald, a young shepherd, the Executioner. Three guards in full armor, the Strange Knight, Knights, Men-at-arms, grooms and a group of the inhabitants of the town.*

Dress and bearing of the characters have something of the chaste, reserved manner of the princely statues in the choir of Naumburg Cathedral.

Scene — The Castle of St. Lubin

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* Permission Richard G. Badger, Boston.

TRISTRAM THE JESTER (1907)

TRANSLATED BY JOHN HEARD, JR.

ACT I

ISEULT'S *apartment at St. Lubin.—A curtain hung from the ceiling cuts off one-third of the room. This third is raised one step above the rest of the room. The background is formed by a double bay-window through which may be seen the tops of some pine trees. In front of a couch, on a small table, stands a large gold shrine in which rests the magic brachet Peticru, a toy of jewels and precious metals. Beside it stands a burning oil torch. The remaining two-thirds of the room are almost empty. A table stands in the foreground; on the floor lies a rug on which are embroidered armorial designs. In the middle and at both sides are wide double doors.* ISEULT *sits on the couch before the shrine. She is clad in a fur-trimmed robe.* BRANGAENE *loosens* ISEULT'S *hair which is divided into two braids. The cold, gray light of dawn brightens gradually; the rising sun falls on the tops of the trees, coloring them with a flood of red and gold.*

SCENE I

SEULT (*singing*).

Brachet of safran and em'rald!
Oh, brachet of purple and gold
Once made by the mighty Urgán
In Avalun's wondrous wold.

Oh purple, and safran, and gold,
When cast in the dim of the night,
Have magical power to aid
All lovers in sorrowful plight!

Lord Tristram slew mighty Urgán,
Lord Tristram the loving, the true,
And pitying sorrowful lovers
He carried away Peticru.

Lord Tristram, the thoughtful and valiant,
Lord Tristram, the noble and high,
Has sent me this wondrous brachet
Lest weeping and grieving I die.

Lord Tristram, my friend, is unfaithful,
And God's wrath on him shall descend;
Though cruelly he has betrayed me,
My love even death cannot end.

Iseult with her hair of spun gold,
Where rubies and emeralds shine,
When the end of her life is at hand,
Round Tristram some charm can entwine.

—When Tristram too shall die. . . .

[ISEULT *stands up, extinguishes the light, and, flooded by her hair, steps to the window.* BRANGAENE *opens a chest from which she takes robes, combs, a mirror, and several small boxes. She prepares a small dressing table.*]

ISEULT. The light begins to filter through the land;
Behold, the trees with storm-bow'd tips drop down
A thousand drops into the moss below
That seem as many sparks, all cold and bright.

Each day is followed by another one,
And then another day, and after each
Comes night. Thus runs my life's long chain of beads,
All black and white, endless, and all the same.
[*She turns and throws off her cloak.*]
Give me my new white cloak, and comb my hair,

I pray, Brangaene.—O, it aches!

[BRANGAENE *throws a cloak over her shoulders.* ISEULT *sits down at the dressing table while* BRANGAENE *combs her hair, dividing it into strands and throwing it, as she combs it, over* ISEULT'S *shoulder.*]

BRANGAENE. The comb
Slides like a keel. Its narrow teeth can find
No bottom, neither shore in this blond sea.
I never saw thy hair so full, Iseult,
Nor yet so heavy! See the golden gold.

ISEULT. It aches—!

BRANGAENE. And here it's damp as though last night
It secretly had dried full many tears.

ISEULT. I wonder if Lord Tristram spent last night
By his new bride—and if he calls her all
Those sweetest names he made for me. Perhaps
He sat upon her couch and told her tales
Of me that made them laugh—! I wonder too
If she be fair, Lord Tristram's new-wed bride!—

SCENE II

ISEULT *turns quickly as her page comes in by the right hand door. He carries a chess-board and sets it down on the table in the foreground.*

ISEULT. Were then thy dreams too painfully like this life,
Paranis, that thou hast outstripped the sun
And now, with eyes all red and swollen, star'st
So heavily?

PARANIS. Your pardon, Queen Iseult,
I could not sleep. Oh lady, what a night!
I tremble still!

ISEULT. The night indeed was wild.

PARANIS. Ay, like the sea the gale whips up. The wind
Swept all the covers from my bed and left
Me cold and trembling. Branches beat the wall
Above my head like demons of the storm.
The owls kept screaming in the groaning eaves
And whispered like lost souls in agony!
Hark! Hear him roar! Oh God, it's Husdent!
Oh listen to him roar. I never heard
A hound thus howl before!

ISEULT. Peace, child. He cries
Thus every night since he has lost his lord.

PARANIS. What? Every night and yet King Mark can sleep?

ISEULT. King Mark can sleep as all good knights can sleep
At any time and any where, while we,
Poor souls, must like a beggar sue for sleep
As for an alms.
(*To* BRANGAENE.)
The mirror and the cloak.

PARANIS. Pray tell me, Queen Iseult, why came we here
With good King Mark and left Tintagel's halls?
Why journeyed we to St. Lubin? The place
Is gloomy and an awful wood grows round
The castle walls. Oh 'tis an awful wood.
I am afraid, Iseult.

ISEULT. Yea, boy, the wood
Is black and gloomy here. Give me some oil,
Brangaene, for my lips are parched and dried
From weeping all this never-ending night.

PARANIS (*goes to the casement*).
Above Tintagel, lo, the sky was blue;
The sun shone on a foreign ship that came
Across the seas and lay at anchor there

And made it look like gold. The ship came in
As we rode through the gate. I wish that I
Were at Tintagel once again and saw
That ship. For here black clouds obscure the sun
And hang close to the ground; they fly along
Like mighty ghosts. The earth smells damp and makes
Me shiver — Ugh — !

ULT (*steps to the casement beside him and puts her arm about his neck*). Nay, not today, for see,
The sun will shine and pour its golden rays
E'en o'er the Morois.
[*She leans out until her head is overflowed by the sunlight.*]
Oh, it's very hot!

RANIS (*falling on his knees*).
Oh Queen Iseult pray take the fairy dog
Into thy hands and it will comfort thee —
That wondrous brachet, Tristram's latest gift.
For, lo, since from Tintagel we have come
My heart is troubled by a wish to ask
Of thee a question, for Brangaene says
That when thou think'st of certain things thou weep'st
But I have never felt the like.

ULT. Poor boy!
I lay awake the whole night through and yet
Not once did I take Petikru to me,
So ask, my child! What wouldst thou know! Mine eyes
Are dry, for all my tears are spent, and gone.
[*She has returned to the dressing table.*]

RANIS. Is this the wood where thou and Tristram dwelt,
As people say, when ye had fled away?

ULT. 'Tis true this wood once sheltered us.

PARANIS (*at the casement*). This wood?
This fearful wood? 'Twas here that thou, Iseult
Of Ireland, Iseult the Goldenhaired,
Took refuge with Lord Tristram like a beast
Hard pressed by dogs and men? There hang, perhaps,
Among the branches still some tattered shreds
From robes thou wor'st; and blood still tints the roots
Thou trod'st upon with bare and wounded feet!
'Twas here thou say'st? Within this wood?

ISEULT (*rising*). Yes, child,
And this the castle—

[BRANGAENE *takes the cloak from* ISEULT'S *shoulders and helps her put on a loose flowing garment.* ISEULT'S *hair is hidden beneath a close-fitting cap.*]

PARANIS (*steps nearer, in great surprise*).
Where ye fled from Mark's
Abom'nable decree? The castle makes
Me shudder and the wood that grows around.

BRANGAENE (*quoting the decree*).
"And if from this day on Lord Tristram dares
To show himself within my realm—he dies,
And with him dies Iseult of Ireland . . ."

ISEULT (*quoting*).
"And witness here my name signed with my blood—"

[*She goes to the table on the right and sets up the chess-men.* PARANIS *sits on a cushion at her feet.* BRANGAENE *clears the dressing table.*]

PARANIS. Is it since that day thou hast wept, my Queen?

ISEULT. Thou know'st my secret boy and yet canst ask!

ANGAENE. Inquire not too much, Paranis, lest
A deeper knowledge of such things consume
Thy soul, and leave in place a cinder-pile.

ANIS. There's more they say, yet I believe no more.

ULT. And what do people say, Paranis?

ANIS. Why,
They say Lord Tristram, since he fled away
To save his life, and, ay, to save thine too,
Forgot thee, Queen Iseult, and thy great love
And wed another in a foreign land.

ULT. They call her Isot of the Fair White Hands.
[*A pause.*]

ANIS. When I'm a man, and wear my gilded spurs
I'll love and serve thee with a truer love
Than Tristram did.

ULT. How old art thou, my child?

ANIS. When I first came to serve thee as a page
Thirteen I was; that was a year ago.
I'm fourteen now, but when I dream, I dream
That I am older and I love thee then
In knightly fashion, and my sword is dull'd
And scarred by blows that it has struck for thee.
My heart beats high when I behold thy face;
My cheek burns hot or freezes ashen pale.
And then, at other times, I dream that I
Have died for thee, only to wake and weep
That I am still a child!

ULT. Listen to me,
Paranis. Once, wandering, a gleeman came
Two years agone and sang a lay in Mark's
High hall; but, see! I said not it applied
To us, this song of his. A song it was
And nothing more. This lay told of a queen,
A certain queen whose page once loved her much,

With all the courtesy of Knighthood's laws;
Whose every glance was for his lady's face;
Whose cheeks alternately went hot and cold
When she was near. But when the King perceived
His changing color and his burning looks,
He slew the boy, and, tearing out his heart,
Now red, now pale, he roasted it, and served
It to his queen and told her 'twas a bird
His favorite hawk had slain that day.

PARANIS. Tell me,
I pray, my lady, when a Knight has won
His spurs may he write songs?

ISEULT. Ay, that he may.

PARANIS. Since that is so, I'd rather sing than fight.
I'll go from court to court and sing in each
How Tristram was untrue to Queen Iseult!
I will avenge thy wrongs in songs instead
Of with the sword, and every one who hears
My words shall weep as thou, my queen, has wept.
I like the lay about that page's heart
Thou toldst me.

ISEULT. Remember it, my child;
Brangaene knows the melody thereof,
And she shall teach it thee that thou mayst learn
The lay.

PARANIS (*at the window*).
The King's awake; I hear him call
His hounds.

ISEULT. Then go, Paranis, bear to him
My morning and my wifely greeting; say
I rested well this night; that thou hast left
Me overjoyed and happy that the day
Is fair. Now haste thee, boy, for soon
The Gaelic barons through the gates shall ride
Coming to pay their homage to King Mark,

Delay not, child, and if the King shall grant
Thee spurs, with mine own hands I'll choose thee out
The finest pair, and deep my name shall stand
Engravèd in the gold. Go greet the King.

[PARANIS *kisses the hem of her robe and goes.*]

SCENE III

ISEULT. Lord Tristram has kept true unto my name
At least—if not to me! 'Tis now the tenth
Year that I mourn for him! In countless nights
Of endless agony have I repaid
Those other nights of happiness and bliss.
Through age-long days now beggared of their joy
I have atoned for all the smiles of yore.
Unkindly have ye dealt with me, sweet friend!
Disloyal Tristram! God shall punish thee,
Not I.

[BRANGAENE *kneels weeping beside her and buries her face in* ISEULT'S *robes.* ISEULT *raises her up.*]

And thou, dear one, sweet sister, come!
My sorrow's past enduring! Help me, help!
At Lubin here the very walls have tongues;
At Lubin here the sombre forest moans;
At Lubin here old Husdent whimpers day
And night unceasingly. 'Twas at Lubin
I parted from him last, my dearest friend,
And to his parting vows I answered thus:
"Take, friend, this golden ring with em'rald stone,
And if in thy name one shall bring it me,
No dungeon walls, no castle gates, no bolts
Shall keep me far from thee." And he: "I thank

Thee, dearest lady, and I swear that if,
At any time, in any place, one calls
On me by thy sweet name I'll stand and wait
And answer in thy name by day or night."
And then — and then — he rode away!

BRANGAENE. Iseult!
Iseult, my dearest, might I die, for I,
Wretch that I am, am most at fault,
Too ready for deceits and secret ways!

ISEULT. Because I love a life, and better still
A death, that's great from savage unrestraint,
Such as I found in mighty Tristram's love,
'Tis not thy fault. And formerly when thou
Didst lend me thine own maiden smock to wear
Upon my bridal night with Mark, since mine
Was torn when I set foot on Cornish ground,
Thou didst fulfill what, as my guardian friend,
Thou hadst foreseen in earlier days. Weep not
Because I weep; Lord Tristram's treachery
Is his, not ours. For this it is I weep.

BRANGAENE. Thou shouldst not say, he is not faithful still,
Dear sister. What know we of him or his?

ISEULT. That he has married!

BRANGAENE. Ay, her name's Iseult.

ISEULT. My name! I shudder when I think thereon.
And lo, his perjured tongue rots not, nor cleaves
Unto his teeth, nor does the name he calls
Her by choke in his throat and strangle him.

BRANGAENE. Mark me, Iseult, I had not meant to speak,
But now I must: a servant of King Mark's
Spoke lately of that ship we saw sail in
And then cast anchor 'neath Tintagel's walls.
A merchant ship it is, he said, and hails
Direct from Arundland. Now send
And bid these merchants leave their ship and come,

That they may tell what they have seen or heard
Of Tristram and his fate.

PARANIS (*runs in and leaps upon the window-sill*).
Oh Queen, there come
Three Gaelic earls! Dinas of Lidan first.

BRANGAENE (*hastening to his side*).
Come then, Iseult, and from the casement here
Behold the faithful Dinas, Tristram's friend!

PARANIS. The one in coat of mail who rides behind
Who is the man, Brangaene, canst thou see?

BRANGAENE. Oh God! Denovalin, ill-omened bird
Of grim Tintagel.

ISEULT. Arund? Didst thou say
A merchant ship sailed in from Arundland?
That great gold sail, Brangaene, came across
The ocean to Tintagel? What? A ship,
And merchant men from Arund? Speak, friend, speak!
Thou talk'st of Arund, and remain'st unmoved!
Brangaene, cruel, speak and say the men
Are on their way to me, or are now here!
Torture me not!

BRANGAENE. Nay, hear me speak, Iseult;
I said a servant of King Mark's said this;
I know not whether it be true; to know
We must be back within Tintagel's walls.

ISEULT (*in rising agitation*).
Wait till we're back within Tintagel's walls?
Not see the merchants till we are gone back,
And linger thus for three whole days, say'st thou?
Nay, nay, Brangaene, nay I will not wait.
'Twas not for this ten never-ending years
I sat upon Tintagel's tower and watched
With anxious eyes the many ships sail o'er

The green expanse from sky to sky. 'Twas not
For this; that day by day Paranis went,
At my behest, down to the port, while I
Sat counting every minute, one by one,
Until he should return, and tell me tales
Of ships and lands indifferent as a fly's
Short life to me! — And now thou tellest me
A ship is here; a great gold sail lies moor'd
Hard by Tintagel's walls, a ship in which
Men live, and speak, and say when asked:
"Where come ye from?" "From Arundland we sail."
Go quick, Brangaene; to Tintagel send, I pray,
At once some swift and faithful messenger,
And bid him with all haste lead here to me
These merchants over night. I need both silks
And laces, samite and the snowy fur
Of ermines, and whatever else they have.
All that they have I'll gladly buy! Let them
But ride with speed!

BRANGAENE. Ay, ride as peddlers do!
Yet will I send Gawain, since 'tis thy wish,
And with him yet another.

PARANIS. Queen Iseult,
May I go with Gawain? I'll make them ride,
These merchant-men! I'll stick my dagger twixt
Their shoulder blades and prick them 'till from fear
They fairly fly to thee!

ISEULT. Nay, rather, child,
Stay here with me; but help Brangaene find Gawain.

[BRANGAENE *and* PARANIS *open the door at the back of the stage but stand back on either side to permit* MARK *and the three Barons to enter.*]

BRANGAENE. The King!

Scene IV

Brangaene *and* Paranis *go.* Mark *and the barons remain standing at some distance from* Iseult. Denovalin *remains in the background and during this and the following scene stands almost motionless in the same spot.*

Mark. There stands Iseult, my queen,
All glorious as the summer day that shines
O'er all the world! Now welcome, my Iseult!
Now welcome to Lubin! These gallant lords
Are come to greet thee—Dinas, Ganelun,
Denovalin.—They have not seen thee now
For many months. And ye, my noble lords,
Is she not blonder than of yore?
[*He glances at a locket that hangs about his neck.*]
For see!
This lock of hair Lord Tristram brought me once.
Behold it now, 'tis almost black next hers.

Iseult. I greet thee, Dinas, Lord of Lidan, friend,
Most loyal friend:—and thou, Lord Ganelun,
Most heartily, for many days have pass'd
Since last we met.

Dinas. Ay, many days, Iseult.

Iseult. Hast thou forgot Tintagel's King and Queen?
'Twas not so once.

Ganelun. I've been at Arthur's court
Nigh on two years, and there have taken part
In many deeds of high renown. 'Tis this
Has kept me from Tintagel and from home.

Dinas. And I, fair Queen Iseult, am growing old;
I've left the saddle for the pillow's ease.
(*Pointedly.*)
I see the chess-board stands prepared and so,
If Mark permits, 'tis I who in his place
Will lead the crimson pawns today, as we
Were wont to do in former days. I love
The game but have no friend with whom to play.

MARK. Ay, Dinas, good it is to have some one
Who loves us near us in our twilight years;
So play today with Goldenhaired Iseult.
Perchance it may amuse her too, for oft
She seemeth sad, and mourns as women do
Who have no children.—God forgive us both!
But come, my lords, first let us drink a pledge
Of greeting, and permit this man to make
His peace with my fair queen. I hate long feuds.
Come, friends, come, let us drink, for all this day
We'll spend together in good fellowship.
[*He leaves the room with* DINAS *and* GANELUN *by the door on the right.* ISEULT *and* DENOVALIN *stand opposite each other, some distance apart, silent and motionless.*]

SCENE V

DENOVALIN (*calmly and insinuatingly*).
Am I a vulture, Queen Iseult, that thou
Art silent when I am within thy cage?
ISEULT (*angrily*).
My Lord Denovalin, how dar'st thou show
Thyself thus brazenly before me here?
DENOVALIN. Harsh words the Queen Iseult is pleased to use!
ISEULT. And I shall beg the King that he forbid
Thee to appear within a mile around
The castle with thy visor raised.
DENOVALIN. King Mark
Is not my over-lord. I'm not his liege.
ISEULT. And I tell thee, my Lord Denovalin,
Thy face is more abhorred by me than plague;
More hateful than dread leprosy! Away!
DENOVALIN. More measured should'st thou be in thy reproof.
(*Much moved.*)
It was for thee I came today, harsh Queen!

ISEULT (*passionately*).
When last thou stoodst before my face, my Lord,
Naked I was, and men at arms prepar'd
The glowing pyre whereon thy jealousy
Had doomed my youthful body to be burned!
Calm wast thou then; no quiver moved thy face,
Untroubled by thy deed. Dost thou forget?

DENOVALIN. And Tristram stood beside thee then, as he
Had stood, when I accused thee to King Mark,
And when I see him standing next to thee,
My eyes grow dim and all the world seems red
With blood. 'Twas him I saw, not thee, Iseult,
Else had I died of sorrow and of shame.

ISEULT. What, *thou?* *Thou* grieve! *Thou* die of shame? The stones
Shall soften and shall melt ere thou, my lord,
Hast learned what pity means!

DENOVALIN. Thou dost misjudge
Me, Queen Iseult, for when thy foot first touched
The Cornish strand as thou stepped'st from thy ship
And came to be the bride of Mark, I saw
Thee then, and by the Lord, a solemn oath
Of loyalty upon thy golden hair
To thee I swore! Oh thou wast wondrous fair!

ISEULT. And I, my Lord, what evil did I thee?

DENOVALIN. Thou lovèd'st Tristram.

ISEULT. What? Denovalin,
When, by a miracle of God, I have
Escaped the fiery death which thou prepared'st;
When, with these tender hands of mine, I bore
Before my judges, and without a burn
The glowing iron, and with sacred oath
Have sworn, thou darest doubt Almighty God's

Decree, and dar'st accuse me still, and say
I love Lord Tristram with a guilty love?
This nephew of my wedded spouse! Of this
I'll make complaint unto my sponsors, Lord!

DENOVALIN (*calmly*).
Almighty God thou hast, perhaps, deceived,
But we, at least, Iseult, we must be frank,
Though enemies, and deal straightforwardly
With one another.

ISEULT. Go, thou were-wolf! — Go!

DENOVALIN. There was a time when I, too, heard the song
Of birds in spring-time; but the fragrant breath
Thy golden hair exhales,— that hair which I
Have seen flow rippling through Lord Tristram's hands —
Has made me hard and rough — a very beast!
I live pent up within my castle walls
As some old wolf! I sleep all day and ride
At night! Ay, ride until my steed comes home
With gasping nostril and with bloody flank,
And lies as dead when morning comes! My hounds
Fall dead along the road! And yet, may be,
That long before the earliest cock has crowed
I cry aloud upon thy name each day
Like one who swelters in his own life's blood!
Remember this, for hadst thou once, Iseult,
Beside me ridden ere the night grew dark,
Perchance this hatred of all living things
Had never got such hold upon my soul.
Remember this, throughout the many things
Which shall, ere evening, come to pass.
And evening comes to thee, Iseult,— to me,
To all! And so 'tis best thou understand
The secret of the past fairly to judge.
This is the peace I fain would have with thee.

ISEULT. I am afraid — afraid — of thee!

DENOVALIN. Thou shouldst
Not fear, Iseult, these words so seemingly
Devoid of sense!
(*Changing the subject.*)
At dawn today I rode
Along the Morois.

ISEULT. Ay, since that's the road
That leads the straightest from thy lofty hall
To St. Lubin.—

DENOVALIN. I met a quarry there!
A quarry wondrous strange! Shall I, Iseult,
Go bring it bound to thee?

ISEULT (*in great anxiety*). I wish no fur,
Or pelts slain by thy hand, Denovalin—

DENOVALIN. That I believe, Iseult, yet it might please
King Mark.
(*Breaking out passionately.*)
It might be that once more
Thou felt'st the burning touch of death, all hot
And red. And if no safe retreat there were
For thee in Cornwall, save my castle walls,
And not a man in Cornwall stood to shield
Thy golden tresses from the hangman's hand
Except myself! If such the case what wouldst
Thou do if I said "come?"

ISEULT (*wild with terror and despair*). If such the case,
Oh God of Bethlehem! If such the case
I'd fling my arms about the neck of Death,
And, clinging close to him, I'd spit at thee,
Denovalin! Those wrinkles, cold and hard,
About thy mouth on either side disgust
Me! Go, Denovalin! I loath thee! Go!

DENOVALIN. I go, Iseult, for thou hast made thy choice;
Forget it not. Forget not, too, the pact
Of peace my soul has made with thine. Farewell!
I'll go and bid Lord Dinas come to play

At chess with thee. Play quickly, Queen Iseult,
Thy time is short, and short shall be thy game!
[*He goes.*]

SCENE VI

ISEULT. Oh God, how bitter are his words! They cut
Like sharpen'd swords and burn like hissing flames!
What is his will? His speech, though witless, ay,
And senseless too, insults and threatens me.—
It warns me too — of what? — Oh God, I quake!
If but Brangaene came, or Dinas came!
They come not and this creeping fear — how hard
It grips my soul! — More Gaelic barons come — !
How often have I stood concealèd here
And seen him come proud riding through the gate!
My friend that comes no more! How grand he was!
His lofty stature did o'ertop them all!
How nobly trod his steed! — Dear Tristram, friend,
Does thy new Isot's heart beat quick as mine
At but the thought of thy dear step?
(*Kneels down in front of the little shrine.*)
And thou,
Oh little brachet, thinks thy lord of me,
As I of him? — "For they who drink thereof
Together so shall love with every sense
Alive, yet senseless — with their every thought
Yet thoughtless too, in life, in death, for aye —.
Yet he, who once has known the wond'rous bliss
Of that intoxicating cup of love,
Spits out the draught disloyally, shall be

A homeless and a friendless worm — a weed
That grows beside the road." Oh Tristram, Lord.

DINAS *enters.* ISEULT *rushes toward him.*

Dinas of Lidan! Dearest friend, most true!
With what has this man threatened me? Of what,
Then, warned? — friend, speak, for round me whirls the world;
My brain is dizzy with each thought!

DINAS. My Lord
Denovalin has bid me come to thee
To play at chess. He said thou wast in haste.
And has he, as Mark ordered him, made peace
With thee?

ISEULT. Made peace with me! I told
Thee, Dinas, that he has stirred up the past
With gloomy words and threatened me. He spoke
Forebodingly of coming days — ; I fear
His words and know not what is brewing o'er
My head!

DINAS. Denovalin has threatened thee!
That bodes no good!

ISEULT. What think'st thou, Dinas? Speak!

DINAS. It makes me almost fear that I was not
Deceived this morn as through the mist I rode.

ISEULT. Oh Dinas!

DINAS. For I saw a man who rode
As secretly, and stole along the way
Concealèd in the murky mists of dawn.
I —

ISEULT. Dinas!

DINAS. Tristram's in the land, Iseult!

ISEULT. Oh Dinas, speak! (*Softly.*) My friend, Lord Tristram came

At dawn today — ? The man who loved me so!
My dearest Lord — ! Oh Dinas, Dinas, didst
(*recovering herself*)
Thou speak to him?

DINAS (*sternly*). Twice called I him. He fled.

ISEULT. Oh, why didst thou not call him in my name?
He would have stood thee answer then, for that
He swore to me he'd do, by day or night
At any place. . . .

DINAS. I called him in thy name,
And yet he fled away.

ISEULT. He fled from thee?
(*Angrily.*)
It was not Tristram then! How dar'st thou speak
Such slander 'gainst my Lord!

DINAS. I swore that I
Would be thy friend, and for thy sake, Iseult,
His friend. But now I say Lord Tristram broke
The oath he swore to thee, and on this day
Hath wronged thee grievously, Iseult.

ISEULT (*heavily and brokenly*). The spouse
Of Isot of the Fair White Hands appeared
To thee, say'st thou, and broke his parting oath,
The last he swore to Iseult Goldenhaired?

PARANIS (*enters in ill-suppressed excitement*).
Lord Dinas, from King Mark I come. He bids
Thee come to him straightway with all despatch,
For in the name of justice calls he thee.

ISEULT. Oh Dinas, Dinas, Tristram broke his oath — !
Lord Tristram broke his oath — !

DINAS. And dost thou know,
My queen, that we must now attempt to ward
The consequences of King Mark's decree
And its fulfilment from thy head?

ISEULT (*angrily*). How can
An alien woman's spouse affect my life?

DINAS. I go to stem with all the strength I have
This current of perdition. Fare thee well.

[*As* DINAS *goes out, three armed guards step into the room and stand on either side of the door.*]

ISEULT. And fare thee well, thou truest of the true!
(*To the guards.*)
And ye, what seek ye here?

GUARD. King Mark has bid
Us guard thy door; thou may'st not go abroad
Till Mark has bid thee come.

PARANIS (*falls on his knees*). Gawain lies bound;
Brangaene's cast into a prison cell,
And something awful's taking place within
The castle walls!—I know not what it is!

ISEULT. Paranis, child, be still.

ACT II

The High Hall of St. Lubin Castle.— Bay windows. On the right, in the background is a wide double-door. On the left, in the background, and diagonally to it stands a long table surrounded by high-back chairs. The chairs at either end of the table are higher than the others and are decorated with the royal arms. Against the wall on the left stands a throne.

Four Gaelic barons stand, or sit about the table. LORD GANELUN *enters.*

SCENE I

A BARON. And canst thou tell us now, Lord Ganelun,
What's taking place that we are summoned here
In council while our legs are scarcely dry
From our long ride?

2D BARON. A welcome such as this
I like not, Lords!

GANELUN. I know no more than ye,
My lords, who are but lately come.

3D BARON. And where
Is Mark, the King?

2D BARON. Instead of greeting us
He sends a low born knave, and bids us wait
Within these dry and barren walls.

1ST BARON (*stands up*). By God,
I feel a wish to mount my horse and ride
Away!

5TH BARON (*entering*).
Do ye, my Lords, know why King Mark
Lets Tristram's savage hound, old Husdent live?
It needed but a little that it caused
My death!

4TH BARON. Just now?

5TH BARON. As I rode by its cage
It leap'd against the bars, and made them shake
With such a noise that my affrighted horse
Uprear'd, and headlong sprang across the court.

GANELUN. The hound is wolflike; none can go within
His cage. Three keepers has he torn to death.

5TH BARON. A wild and dang'rous beast! I would not keep
The brute within my castle walls.

3D BARON (*walks irritatedly to the window*). How this
Long waiting irks my soul, good friends!

1ST BARON. So cold
A welcome have I never yet received,
And new the custom is!

GANELUN. Have patience, sirs,
It seems King Mark and Lord Denovalin
Discuss in secret weighty things—

3D BARON. —And wish
To teach us how to wait!

GANELUN. Nay, here's King Mark!

ERNST HARDT

SCENE II

RK and DENOVALIN *enter; behind them comes a man-at-arms who closes he door and stands against the wall beside it.* MARK *holds a parchment n his hand, and, without noticing the barons, walks agitatedly to the ront of the stage.* DENOVALIN *goes behind the table and places himself etween it and the throne. The barons rise.*

T BARON. Does Mark no longer know us that he greets
Us not?

BARON. And dost thou know, my Lord—?

ARK (*turning angrily upon the baron*). Am I
A weak old man because my hair is gray,
Because my hands are wrinkled, ay, and hard,
Because at times my armor chafes my back?
Am I an old and sapless log? A man
Used up who shall forever keep his peace?
(*Controlling himself.*)
I crave your pardon, Lords, pray take your seats.

NAS. Thou badst me come to thee.

ARK. Yes, Dinas, yes,
So take thy place.
(*He controls his emotion with great difficulty and speaks heavily.*)
And ye, my noble friends,
Give ear. A great and careful reckoning shall
Take place 'twixt you and me. Your sanctioning word
I wish, for what I am about to do,
For yonder man has, with an evil lance,
Attacked me and he has so lifted me
Out of my saddle that my head doth swim,
And trembles from the shock, and so I pray
You to forgive the churlish greeting ye
Received; 'twas accident, not scorn. I bid
You welcome, one and all, most heartily.

BARON. We greet thee, Mark.

NELUN. But tell us now what thing
So overclouds thy mind; thy welfare dwells
Close intertwined with ours.

DENOVALIN (*unfolding the parchment*). And now, my Lords,
Are any of the witnesses not here
Who signed the contract and decree which Mark
Drew up with Tristram and with Queen Iseult?

1ST BARON. 'Tis then of this decree that thou wouldst speak?

3D BARON. I signed.

4TH BARON. And I.

5TH BARON. And I.

MARK. Three witnesses
There were, and ye are three. 'Tis good, my Lords,
That we are all assembled here.
[*He speaks brokenly and with all the marks of mental suffering and suppressed emotion.*]
Ye know
How long I lived alone within these walls
With my good nephew Tristram and not once
Did any woman cross my threshold o'er.

5TH BARON. And 'twas through us that things were changed; we cried
Upon thee for a son and heir.

2D BARON. Iseult
Then came from Ireland to be thy Queen.

DENOVALIN (*coldly, firmly, and in a loud voice*).
Nobly escorted, in Lord Tristram's care!

MARK (*softly*).
I wooed Iseult, and much it pleased me then
To call this sweet and noble lady mine,
And so to honor her. But see, it was
But for a single day, then came this man
(*Points to* DENOVALIN.)
And spake to me and said: "Thy wife Iseult
And Tristram whisper in the dark!" And since
The speaking of that evil word, this world

Has turned to hell, and through my veins my blood
Has run like seething fire for her sake,
Who was my wife, and cried for her as though
She were not mine!

BARON. But thou didst not believe
These evil words?

ARK. No, never in my life
Did I fight off a foeman from myself
More fiercely than these words.

ENOVALIN (*sternly*). But soon this man
Came back and said: "The hands of Queen Iseult
And Tristram's hands are locked when it is dark."

ARK. And then I slunk about them like a wretch,
My lords; I spied upon their lips, their hands,
Their eyes! I watched them like a murderer;
I listened underneath their window-sills
At night to catch their dreaming words, until
I scorned myself for this wild wretchedness!
Nothing, nothing I found, and yet Iseult
From that time on was dearer than my God
And his Salvation!

NELUN. Yet thou ever held'st
Iseult in honor and esteem!

ARK. Ay, that I did,
Friend Ganelun, but soon that man there came
And whispered in mine ear: "Art thou stone blind?
Thy nephew Tristram and thy Queen Iseult
Are sleeping in each other's arms by day
And night!" Oh God! Oh God! My Lords, I set

To work — and thought I'd caught the pair! —
Poor fool!

(*He hides his face.*)

DINAS. 'Tis so; and thou badst build a mighty pyre
Of seasoned wood and well dried peat. But God
Almighty blew the fire out. They fled,
The twain together, to the Morois land.

MARK. And then one night I stole upon them both.
(Lord Dinas knew of this alone, my Lords.)
Iseult was sleeping, and Lord Tristram slept
An arm's length scarce before me in the moss
All pale and wan, and breathed so heavily,
So wearily, like some hard hunted beasts.

(*Groaning.*)

Oh God, how easy was it then! — See what
Befell! There, 'twixt their bodies lay a sword,
All naked, ay, and sharp —
'Twas Morholl's sword!
— Then silently I took it, and I left
Mine own, and, like a fool, I wept at their
Great purity!

2D BARON. Was Tristram so much moved
By this exchange of swords that he gave back
Thy wife Iseult?

MARK (*violently*). And, God! I took her! See
His cunning counsel circumvented then
The red hot steel and made her innocence
Seem more apparent, and her hands shone white,
Unburned, and all unscarred like ivory
After the test! My nephew Tristram fled,
Exiled, and the decree that ye all know
Was sealed. So harken now, ye witnesses
Of the decree: if Tristram were to break
The bond and secretly, and in disguise
Return to Cornwall —

BARON. God forbid!
H BARON. Yet if
Lord Tristram should do this and break the bond,
And thus endanger both his life and Queen Iseult's—
H BARON. If such the case they lied to thee,
King Mark, and unto God!
ARK. They lied! They lied!
Ay, man, they lied to me and unto God!
And now I need no longer feel my way
Nor tap about me in the dark, nor bump
My soul against my blindness! Ay, they lied!
My bed was foul; my life a jest for knaves,
For they had lied. But then, behold, that man
There came,—Denovalin I hate thee!—came
And said Lord Tristram broke the bond—
[*The barons spring up.*]
T BARON. How so?
BARON. What knows he?
BARON. Speak, Denovalin!
NELUN. Thou say'st
Lord Tristram broke the bond that holds his life?
H BARON. I'll not believe it!
H BARON. Tristram wed, ye know,
The daughter of King Kark of Arundland.
BARON. Denovalin must bring us proofs!
ARK. Gently,
My Lords. Before the high tribunal shall
He speak. Go, call the Queen.
[*The man-at-arms goes.*]
NAS. King Mark,
Why dost thou hasten to believe this tale?
Remember, 'tis Denovalin who speaks.

MARK. 'Tis not a matter of belief, my friend,
I wish to know if for her sake he came;
To see her once again — no more. The rest
I know, and I know, too, the end of this;
This game that's played about my life, my blood,
Mine honor!

SCENE III

The guardsman announces the queen who enters the hall followed by PARANIS. *She remains in the background. The barons rise as she appears.*

GUARDSMAN. Place! Iseult the queen comes! Place!

ISEULT (*quietly and gently*).
Ye called me, sirs; now speak, for I am here.

MARK (*takes an angry step toward her, checks himself, and stares at her a moment. He speaks slowly and without moving*).
Lord Dinas, bid Iseult of Ireland draw near!
[ISEULT, *without waiting for* DINAS, *steps to the middle of the hall.* MARK *does not move and speaks louder.*]
Lord Dinas, bid Iseult of Ireland draw near!
And sit there by the board — there at the head
And facing me.

ISEULT. And may I ask thee now
What this extraordinary custom is,
That twice thou dost repeat it, Mark? In mine
Own land of Ireland I never saw
A man thus treat his wife. So, if it suits
Thy will,— I'll stand!
[*Neither* MARK *nor the barons move. Anxiously.*]
Will no one speak to me?

MARK. My Lords, sit down.
[*He walks in front of the table.* PARANIS *kneels beside* ISEULT, *who lays her hand upon his head as on the head of a dog.*]

SEULT. Thou call'dst me, Mark, and bad'st
Me come in terms full stern and harsh—I came,
For 'tis my heartfelt duty to obey.
Since thou art good to me and kind. Thou know'st
This hall, these men, that stand around, awake
Full many a painful memory in my heart,
And so I crave a swift reply. What will
Ye of me here?

LARK (*roughly*). Why was Gawain sent forth
In secret to Tintagel from Lubin?

SEULT. He went not secretly, but openly,
My Lord, and that because some merchant-men
Came to Tintagel from across the seas
With merchandise. I wished to bid them come
To me that I might choose me from their stock the wares
That pleased me and the many things I need.

LARK (*scornfully*).
The purchase must be made at once, I trow!
Since here, more than elsewhere, thou need'st such things.
'Tis true that fifteen beasts of burden stayed
Behind, all laden with thy things alone,
Unnoticed by a well beside the road,
Iseult, I recollect me now!

SEULT. Nay, Lord,
Yet St. Lubin brings me full many a sad
And weary hour. I, therefore, thought to gain
Some slight diversion and amusement too
To soothe my woe. Thou know'st the joy I have
Of mingled masses of bright colored things
Both strange and rare!
(*Anxiously.*)
The rustling silks; the gold—;
Th' embroidery of robes; the jewel's flash;—

Furs, chains and golden girdles, needles, clasps!
To see, and in my hands to hold such things
O'erjoys me much!—A childish whim, perhaps,
But thou thyself this pleasure oft procured'st
And sent the merchants to my bower. What
Wonder is it then that I myself should think
Of this same thing?

MARK. 'Tis so, I wronged thy thoughts,
For I myself have often brought such men
To thee. These peddlers and these mountebanks
Are famous friends! I see it now! They come
From far and wide; they travel much; they are
Both wise and cunning—apt, indeed, to serve
As messengers!

ISEULT. Ay, Mark, thou didst me wrong,
But greater to Brangaene and Gawain.
I pray thee set them free; they but obeyed
My will.

MARK (*angrily*). Bring forth the pair, and set them free
These go-betweens Brangaene and Gawain!
[*The soldier goes.*]
Tell now, my Lord Denovalin, thy tale,
And speak thy words distinctly, ay, and loud!
And ye, my Lords, I pray you, listen well;
A pretty tale!
[*He crouches on the steps of the throne, and stares at* ISEULT. DENOVALIN *steps forward from behind the table.*]

DENOVALIN. I rode today at dawn,
And, coming through the Morois, saw, while yet
The mist was hanging in the trees, around
A curving of the road, a man who rode.
Full proud and straight he sat upon his steed,
But yet he seemed to wish that none should see

Him there, for carefully did he avoid
The clearer spots, and peering round about,
He listened and he keenly watched, then turned
Into a thicket when afar he heard
The hoof-beats of my horse. I followed him,
And soon I was as near as a man's voice
Will carry. Loud and haughtily I called
To him, but then he drove the spurs so deep
Into his steed that, like a wounded stag,
It sprang into the air and dashed away.
I followed close behind, and bade the man
In knightly and in manly honor stand.
He heeded not my words and fled away.
And then I cried aloud that he should stand,
And called him by Iseult the Goldenhaired.

ISEULT (*passionately and firmly*).

And at my name Lord Tristram stood.
(*Anxiously.*) Did he
Not stand and wait?
(*Imploringly.*)
Oh, say that at that call
Lord Tristram stood!
(*Passionately.*)
And I will bless thy lips.

MARK (*cries out in a muffled voice*).

Iseult!

ISEULT. I'll kiss thy hand, my Lord, and I—

DENOVALIN. Who says, proud Queen Iseult, the man I saw
Was Tristram, noble Lord of Lyonesse?

ISEULT (*her voice becomes proud and cold*).

My Lord Denovalin, I'll kiss thy hands
If thou wilt say my husband's nephew stood
And bided you, for sorely would it vex
My heart if such a knight should flee from such
A man as thou! 'Twould shame me much, for know,
My Lord Denovalin, I scorn and hate
Thee as a cur!

DENOVALIN (*suppressing his emotion*).
If Tristram stood or fled
From me, I do not say.

ISEULT. That vexes me
Indeed, for now, my Lords, I turn to you
With deeper and more serious complaints
Against Lord Tristram that so rashly he
Has broken Mark's decree, thus forcing me
To share a guilt of which my soul is clean!

MARK (*crouches on the steps of the throne groaning*).
Oh see how well her Irish tongue can twist
Her words to suit her will! Her words are smooth;
So smooth that when one grasps them they escape
The hand like shining, slippery, squirming snakes!
And she has subtle words, caressing words,
And words that set the mind on fire; hot words
That burn, and haughty ones that swell and puff
Like stallions' nostrils, and toss high their heads!
Oh she has words, and words, and many words
With which to frame her lies!
(*He takes a step toward* ISEULT. *Angrily.*)
And see her eyes!
Those wondrous eyes! Eyes for deceit! She has
Deceived me with those eyes and lips of hers since first
She set her foot upon the Cornish shore!

ISEULT (*trembling with shame and anger*).
Thy words are like the shame of women, Mark!
Like filthy hands! Irish I am, but there,
In word and deed, polite restraint prevails
And courteous measuredness; there fiery wrath

Becomes ne'er master of the man! And so
I was not taught in early youth to guard
Myself from drunkenness of wrath!

MARK. O hark!
That was a sample of her haughty words!
Iseult the Goldenhaired of Ireland
Didst thou with thine own hand and blood sign this?

ISEULT. Ay, Mark, I signed the bond.
(*With closed eyes quoting.*)
"And if from this
Day on Lord Tristram dares to show himself
Within my realm, he dies, and with him dies
Iseult of Ireland"—I signed my name
And wrote it with my blood.

MARK. Denovalin
Most solemnly has pledged his head and soul
That he has seen my nephew Tristram, Lord
Of Lyonesse within my realm, and so,
If none stand forth to contradict, Iseult
Of Ireland shall die.

DINAS (*stands up*). Denovalin
Has lied!

MARK. Dinas of Lidan!

GANELUN. Well said, good
Dinas!

DINAS. I, too, did meet a man today
At early dawn whom I first held to be
Lord Tristram, nephew of King Mark.
Since from the east I rode and thou, my Lord
Denovalin, came through the Morois land
From thy good castle in the west, and since
Lubin stood as a central point between
Us both, Lord Tristram must have been two-fold
That in the east and in the west he crossed
My path, and at the self-same hour, the road

Of Lord Denovalin. This cannot be
And so one of the men was not the true
Lord Tristram; one of us was therefore wrong.
And if 'twas one, then why not both
My Lord Denovalin and I?

MARK. Dinas,
Had I not known thee from thy youth I might
Have held thee guilty with Iseult! Has she
Ensnared thee too with perjured oaths and false
And lying countenance, that thou dost seek
To die for her so eagerly? Thy hair
Is gray like mine. Thou dreamest, man,
Denovalin has pledged his word that he
Has seen Lord Tristram! Ponder well ere thou
Take up his downflung glove.

2D BARON. Yet Dinas may
Be right.

3D BARON. I think so too.

5TH BARON. There cannot be
Two Tristrams in the Morois wood.

DENOVALIN (*springing up*). My Lords,
I've pledged my word! Take heed unto your tongues!

GANELUN. It seems but right to me that Queen Iseult
Should not be put to death until the true
Lord Tristram, quick or dead, be found.

2D BARON. Well said
Lord Ganelun!

3D BARON. So think we all, King Mark!

ISEULT. By God! my Lords, it is enough! ye sit
Discussing here in calm indifference
If I shall live or die, as though I were
An animal! My race is nobly sprung;
I will that ye bow down before my blood,
Since ye do not bow down to womanhood!

I will that ye permit me to return
To my apartments and that ye do not
Here keep me standing like a haltered beast!
King Mark may let me know your will when ye
Decide. And now I wish to go.

ARK (*in swelling anger*). Oh hear her,
My Lords, hear her, does she not make one wish,
Groaning, to cast oneself before her feet;
To kiss her very shoes when she can find
Such noble sentiments and words! Behold
Her there! Is she not fuller than the whole
Wide world of smiles and tears. And when she laughed
With that fair mouth, entrancing and all pale,
Or silvery bright that God's whole world did dance
And sing in God's own hand, 'twas not on me
She smiled. And when upon her lowered lids
There trembled tears like drops of pearly dew
Upon a flower's brim, 'twas not for me
She wept! A phantom hovered over us
In all the sweet dark hours; 'twas for this ghost,
The phantom likeness of Lord Tristram's self,
She wept and smiled, true to her soul, though all
The while her soulless body lay all cold
Within mine arms deceiving me with smiles
And tears! She shall not die till Tristram can
Be found. Bethink you, Lords, the minutes that
Ye grant that mouth to smile! The minutes that
Ye grant those eyes to weep! Whom will it not
Deceive,—her laughter and her tears? Both you,

And me, and God! But I will change her smiles
To tears; her weeping to the bitter laugh
Of hideousness, that we at last may rest,
And be secure from all her woman's wiles!
And since she shall not die, then I will give her
As a gift! This surely is my kingly right,
For I am Mark, her lawful spouse and lord.
Today at noon, when in the sun her hair
Shall shine the brightest in the golden light
Unto the leprous beggars of Lubin
I'll give her as a gift!

DINAS. Mark, art thou mad!

PARANIS. The Queen! Oh help!

ISEULT (*recovering herself*). 'Tis nought; I'm better now.

GANELUN. Thou speak'st a thing, in sorrow and in wrath,
A thing so terrible one fears to think
Thereon!

1ST BARON. Bethink thee, Mark!

2D BARON. Thou ravest, King.

4TH BARON. Thou dost a most foul thing;—recall thy words!

MARK (*crouches on the steps of the throne with his back to the barons*).
At mid-day shall the lepers of Lubin
Collect, and wait within the court.

DINAS. Farewell,
King Mark, I'll stay with thee no more!

GANELUN. I go
With thee.

1ST BARON. And I.

2D BARON. We leave thee, one and all!

MARK (*turns his head, almost smiling*).
Will no one stay with me?

DENOVALIN (*stepping forward*). I will, King Mark.

ıK (*springing up*).
Oh, drive this man outside the walls, and bid
Him ride with speed! I feel a great
Desire to dip my hands in his foul blood
After this awful marriage feast! And if
A second time the Lord shall testify
'Gainst thee, Denovalin, then shalt thou die!
I swear it! Thou shalt die!

ıOVALIN (*calmly*). My castle walls
Are high and strong, oh Mark!

ıLT. What loathsome brutes,
What wretched beasts lust makes of men! Behold
Thyself, Oh Mark, thou that art wise and kind;
How deep consumed by lust! Thou wilt not let
Me live, but dost thy best to shame. That which
Thou lovest most, thou castest forth to be
A prey to vultures, and thou think'st the while
Thou hatest me! Oh Mark, how thou dost err
In thinking that thou hatest me! Behold,
I pity thee! And shall I now beseech,
And wring my hands, humbling myself to thee?
I do not know how women nobly born
Can live on through the loathsome leper test,
And will not think thereon, for 'tis enough
To make a woman die, yet, once again,
Before you all; before my God I swear,
And will repeat my solemn oath, and then,
When I have sworn it, He will send His help
Or let my flesh be torn between the dogs
And leprous human vultures of Lubin.
I swear that I have never thrilled with love
But for that man who clapsed me in his arms,
A maiden still, as clean and pure as snow
New-fallen on a winter's morn. This man,
And this man only, have I loved with all

The faith and passion of my womanhood.
I gave myself to him with all my soul;
My heart was full of dancing and of song;
My love was wreathed in smiles as some May-morn
Laughs softly on the mountain tops. This man
I loved; no other have I loved, though he
May grieve, and shame me, and deceive!—King Mark!

MARK (*almost screaming*).
Oh shield me, he that loves me, from her oaths!

DENOVALIN (*turns calmly to* ISEULT).
Lead back the Queen into her chamber, page!

ACT III

The Inner Courtyard of the Castle.— In the foreground at the left is the Castle gate. In the background on the right, at the top of a broad flight of steps, under an arcade of columns, stands the door of the chapel. At the left of the gate entering the courtyard are some buildings, behind which may be seen the high castle walls surmounted by trees. The road from the Castle to the church is laid with carpets. In the middle of the stage, on the right, stands a stone well. In the background is a crowd of people held back by three armed guards. At the foot of the steps, one on each side, stand two men-at-arms.

SCENE I

1ST GUARD. Back, crowd not there! Stand back!

2D GUARD. The children may
Stand in the front, but hold them. There crawls one!

1ST GUARD (*pushing the child back into the crowd*).
My little friend, get back! Now see, I'll make
A line upon the ground, and if thy toes,
But by a hair's breadth, cross that line again,
I'll drop my spear on them and they shall be
As flat as any barley cake. [*Laughter.*]

1ST GIRL. Ha, Ha!

2D GIRL. Hast thou become a baker, oh Gilain?

1ST GUARD (*lifting his mailed hand*).
Ay, wench, would'st see me knead my dough?
[*Laughter.*]

A BOY. Be still
I hear the crier's voice from down below!

A GIRL. He's wandered up and down the streets since dawn
And called until my blood runs cold!

THE BOY. Hush.

THE GIRL. Hark!

VOICE OF THE CRIER (*distant and ringing*).
Today at noon, because King Mark has found
Her faithless and untrue, shall Queen Iseult
Be given to the lepers of Lubin,—
A gift to take or leave. And, furthermore,
Lord Tristram, who was once her paramour,
Transgressed King Mark's decree by entering
His realm. Whoever catches him and brings
Him quick or dead unto the King shall have
One hundred marks of gold for his reward.
'Tis good King Mark's decree that every one
Should hear and know these things that I have cried.

A CHILD. Oh, I'm afraid! Will he come here, that man?

THE GIRL. I know it all by heart, and still he cries!

A MAN. Ay, let him cry!

ANOTHER MAN. Lord Tristram, he's a fox;
To catch him they must have a good deep pit
Or else he'll scratch them so that all their lives
They'll think thereon.

A GIRL. Tristram's a noble lord,
I'd shield him an I could.

A SECOND GIRL. I want to see
The Queen close by.

A THIRD GIRL. Ay, so do I!

A Fourth Girl. I'll strew
Some flowers in her path as she goes past.

1st Girl. My father made her once a pair of shoes
Of fine white satin, bound with golden clasps
And crimson 'broidery. He says her feet
Are delicate and small; as white and slim
As are the Virgin Mary's in the shrine
That stands within Tintagel's lofty church
Above the great high altar.

4th Girl. Poor, poor soul!

Old Woman. Ay, let her see where those white feet of hers
Have carried her!

3d Guard (*to a boy who has climbed upon the wall*).
Hey, thou! Come down! The wall
And rocks are full an hundred fathoms high,
So, if thou fall, thy howling will not help.

The Boy. I want to sit here when the lepers come!

Another Boy.
A good place that! I'll climb up too.

A Fourth Boy. I too!

1st Guard. Now none of you may stay within the court
To stare when Queen Iseult is given o'er
Unto the lepers. Mark has granted this
Unto the Queen since 'twas her only wish.
Ye all must go into the church.

A Man. May none
Then stay without and watch the lepers?

Another Man. 's wounds!
Why then I came for nothing, all this way!

A Woman (*indignantly*).
Oh shame, thou beast, would'st gloat and make
a show
Of that which one scarce dares to think of!
Fie!
For such foul thoughts thou shouldst be thrown
To Husdent to devour!

2d Guard. Stop wrangling, there!

A Girl. Poor Queen! I pity her!
A Second Girl. King Mark's too harsh!
A Man. She's made a cuckold of him, Girl!
Old Woman. And now
He's tossing her with those new horns of his!
Young Shepherd.
Is then the Queen Iseult so wondrous fair
As she is said to be?
A Girl. Hast thou not seen
The Queen?
Shepherd. No, never yet!
A Girl. He's never seen
The Queen?
A Boy. Behold, here's one who never saw
Our Queen!
A Voice. Who is he?
1st Guard. Speak, where wast thou, friend,
When Queen Iseult stood bound here to the stake?
A Girl. All naked in her wondrous beauty—
Another Girl. All
For her great love.
The Boy. We all did see her then.
Shepherd. I've come since then from Toste in the hills.
A Woman. Here, let this fellow stand in front, that he
May see the Queen's fair face before this swarm
Of vultures has devoured it.
1st Guard. Come here;
If thou hast never seen the Queen thou may'st
Stand here beside the steps.
Shepherd. I thank thee.
A Soldier (*drawing him beside him*). Here!
A Voice. Here come the soldiers!
A Child. Lift me, father.
A Voice. Hsh—!

Scene II

Soldiers march past and enter the church. The church door stays open.

A Girl. I pray thee, Gilain, who will lead the Queen?
1st Guard. The hangman and King Mark.
The Girl. Poor soul!
Old Woman. Why weep'st
Thou, girl?
Old Man (*as a crucifix is carried past*).
Friends, cross yourselves. The crucifix!
Shepherd (*leans forward so that he can see across the courtyard into the castle*).
Behold, she comes! My God, how beautiful—!
An angel—!
The Soldier (*as* Gimella *passes*).
That, my friend, is but her maid
Gimella.
2d Guard. Back! Stand back! Thou shalt not push!
Shepherd. Oh there! Behold, she is a fairy! Yea,
And she is fairer than Gimella far!
I'll fall upon my knees when she goes past.
She's wondrous fair, ay, fairer than a flower,
A lily— See—!
The Soldier (*as* Brangaene *goes by*).
Stand up, thou knave, for that's
Brangaene. She's our lady's faithful maid.
Shepherd. She too was fair! Can one imagine then,
There's any one more beautiful than she?
What wondrous women Mark has at his court!
Such ladies have I never seen—There dwell
None such in Toste! See—! This one—!
Oh, God!
Oh, God! The sun has fall'n—! Its blinding rays—! [*Falls on his knees.*]
The Soldier (*softly*).
That was the Queen!
[Iseult *walks past between* Mark *and the*

A DAUGHTER OF THE PEOPLE

KARL HAIDER

hangman. She is draped in a purple cloak; her feet are bare. PARANIS *follows her. Part of the crowd kneels down.*]

SHEPHERD (*staring*). Oh, Queen Iseult! Iseult
The Goldenhaired!

A GIRL. Oh fairest, dearest one!

ANOTHER GIRL. Oh Queen, smile down upon us once again!

[*A rattling sound is heard. The Strange Leper steps from behind one of the columns. His bearded face is hidden by the hood of his cloak. The crowd draws away shuddering, the procession halts. The leper kneels before* ISEULT *and bows so low that his forehead almost touches her feet.*]

A VOICE. A leper, see!

A GIRL. Oh Virgin Mary, help!

A 2D GIRL. Whence came he here?

A 3D GIRL. He had concealed himself!

MARK (*slowly*).
—Thou cam'st too soon my friend!

[*The leper disappears sidewise under the steps. The procession goes into the church, from which an organ begins to sound. The soldiers and the crowd follow after.*]

A GIRL (*covering her face with her hands*).
Oh, our poor Queen!

A 2D GIRL. She was like alabaster, cold and white!

A 3D GIRL. Not once along the awful way she raised
Her eyes!

A 4TH GIRL. She did not wish to see!

THE 1ST GIRL. Oh fie,
That Mark should shame her so!

THE 2D GUARD. Make haste, ye must
Go in!

1ST GUARD (*to the kneeling shepherd*).
Wake up! Thou too must go within

The church. Now come!

SHEPHERD. The sun fell down!
It grazed my eyes!

A GIRL. I'll pray with all my heart
For our poor Queen!

A 2D GIRL. We all will pray — and curse
The King!

3D GUARD. Thou slut, be still, and hold thy tongue!
Make haste into the church — go in!

1ST GUARD. I hear
The lepers coming! hark!

3D GUARD. Here, girl, thou'st dropped
Thy kerchief! [*He picks it up.*]

THE GIRL. Thanks!

1ST GUARD (*taking the old man by the arm*).
Take hold of me, old man.
Make haste.

[*The doors of the church close: the stage remains empty for a few seconds. The music of the organ swells, and a hymn is heard. Then, by snatches, first distantly, then nearer, the rythmical rattling of the lepers resounds.*]

SCENE III

The lepers enter the courtyard. They are a wild pack dressed in gaudy rags, and rumpled, armless cloaks with hoods; carrying long staves and crutches; with colored cloths bound about their sinister foreheads. Their faces are sunburnt, their hair is snow-white and streams in the wind. Some have their heads shaved. Their arms and feet are bare. Altogether they present a motley appearance, though the hardships of their life, as a band forced to live together, give them the aspect of weather-beaten and dried chaff driven hither and thither by the wind. They stand shyly and rock unsteadily on their dried and shrunken legs — silent and restless. Like ghosts of the noonday, they try to hush their voices throughout the scene.

IWEIN (*is the first to enter; the others file past him*).
Come quick! They've all gone in!

A LEPER. Right here

The cat shall catch the bird!

A Young Leper (*wearing a wreath, made of three or four large red flowers, in his dark hair*).

Heisa! Heisa!

Iwein. Speak softly, there, lest ye disturb the mass.

An Old Leper (*feeble, and supporting himself on a crutch, in the tone of the town crier, almost singing*).

Today shall Queen Iseult, our good King's spouse
Be given to us, the lepers of Lubin—
So cried the herald!—

Young Leper. Brother, brother, dance
With me, for I'm the bridegroom—Ah!—

Old Leper (*in the same tone*). Today
Shall Queen Iseult—

[*Every time that the old leper begins to speak he is silenced by the others.*]

Young Leper (*striking him*). Thou fool!

(*To a fourth leper.*)

Come dance!

4th Leper. Be still!
At noon to eat raw turnips, then at night
To have the Queen to sleep with in the straw!
Ha, ha! It makes me laugh!

A Redhaired Leper. King Mark shall give
Us wine to celebrate our wedding feast!

Young Leper (*dancing*).

Oh, brother, come and dance with me!

A Sixth Leper. I want
To look at her and then get drunk!

Young Leper. Come, then,
And dance with me, my little brother, dance!

Iwein (*coming from the gate*).

Be still, and stand in order by the steps,
That we may see her when the hangman brings
Her forth.

1st Leper (*sits down on the ground*).

I will not stand.

IWEIN. Then crawl, thou toad!
7TH LEPER. Iseult the Goldenhaired!—The lepers' bride,
And Queen!
(*He laughs.*)
REDHAIRED LEPER. Well spoken, friend! We'll call her that!
OLD LEPER. Today shall Queen Iseult—
8TH LEPER. She shall be mine
I' the morning of all holidays!
1ST LEPER. And I
Will have her late at night.
REDHAIRED LEPER. I'll take her first!
6TH LEPER. Not so; Iwein shall have her first for he's
Our King!
YOUNG LEPER (*to redhaired leper*).
Who? Thou?
9TH LEPER. Thou have her first? Who art
Thou, then, thou redhaired knave?
10TH LEPER (*calling out loudly*). Here's one who says
He'll tame the Queen!
1ST LEPER. Oh, break his jaw!
YOUNG LEPER. I want
Her now, my friends; my loins burn and itch
For her!
REDHAIRED LEPER. I'll beat you, cripples, and I'll make
You all more cripple than ye are,
Unless ye give her me to kiss and hug
For one full week at least!
IWEIN. What crowest thou,
Redheaded rooster?—Ye shall all draw lots
For who shall have her after me!
11TH LEPER. Ay, let's
Draw lots.
REDHAIRED LEPER. Plague on you all!
4TH LEPER. It's on us now!
Come, let's draw lots!
6TH LEPER. Draw lots!
OLD LEPER. But first of all
I'll make her mend my clothes.

4TH LEPER (*tearing up a cloth*). I'll tear the lots!
1ST LEPER. Here, put them in my cloak! Now come, and draw!
12TH LEPER. Look yonder! There's another one.
REDHAIRED LEPER. Where? Where?
[*As they crowd around, the Strange Leper steps from behind the column.*]
6TH LEPER. There, yonder, see — ?
10TH LEPER. Who is he?
9TH LEPER. Look!
YOUNG LEPER (*goes to the steps*). Who art Thou?
IWEIN. Speak! Art thou a leper too, as we?
OLD LEPER (*to the stranger*).
Today shall Queen Iseult, our good King's spouse —
REDHAIRED LEPER.
Be still, old fool!
IWEIN. Wilt thou not answer me?
I am Iwein, the Lepers' King; what wouldst Thou here?
[*The Strange Leper throws money among them.*]
1ST LEPER (*leaping, with the rest, to seize the money*).
Holla!
10TH LEPER. He's throwing money! See!
STR. LEPER. I am a leper from Karesh and wish
To dwell among you here at St. Lubin.
4TH LEPER. Thou'st smelt the bird from far, good friend!
REDHAIRED LEPER. We will
Admit no new companion to our band!
9TH LEPER. Go home, we'll none of thee!
11TH LEPER. Hast thou more gold?
STR. LEPER (*holding up a purse*).
Iwein shall have it and distribute it
Among you, if ye'll take me in.
12TH LEPER. Ha! 's death!
Thou art a rich young varlet!

1st Leper. Let him stay!
4th Leper. I care not if there be one more or less!
Iwein. Come down to us. What is thy name?
[*The Strange Leper comes down from the steps.*]
7th Leper. How tall
Thou art! If Godwin dares to threaten me
Thou'lt punish him.
Young Leper. And what's thy name?
Str. Leper. Why, call
Me then the Sad One, for that is my name.
Iwein. Then come, thou Sad One, take thy place. They'll keep
Us not much longer waiting for our spouse.
6th Leper (*to the stranger*).
King Mark's a kind and gen'rous King to think
Of giving us a wife!
Old Leper (*to the stranger*). The herald cried
That Queen Iseult of Ireland, King Mark's
Own spouse today should be—
Iwein. Fool, hold thy tongue!
Let's all together make a noise, and shake
Our clappers as a sign.
[*They shake their rattles.*]
12th Leper. The door! The door!
Young Leper. Be still! Be still! She's coming now!
Iwein. Be still.

Scene IV

The door of the church is partially opened. The hangman leads Iseult *out. The Strange Leper falls on his knees and bows deep to the ground.*

Young Leper. Let's fall upon our knees, Iwein!
[*A few lepers kneel. The hangman takes* Iseult's *crown and cloak away. She stands there, draped only in her golden hair. Her eyes are closed and she remains motionless.*]

THE HANGMAN (*kissing* ISEULT'S *foot*). Forgive
Me, Queen Iseult, for God's sweet sake!
[*He goes back into the church. The door closes and the organ sounds louder in the silence.*]

IWEIN. We are
The lepers of Lubin, and thou, by Mark's
Decree, art now our bride. Come down that we—
[*The Strange Leper, with a violent effort, springs to his feet, and turns upon the lepers.*]

STR. LEPER. Who spoke? Which one of you? Tell me, who spoke?
Scabs! Vultures! Curs, away! Be off! If one
Of you but speaks again I'll trample you
Beneath my feet and grind you in the dirt.
What wish ye here? Here's gold! Be off, ye curs!
[*Only a few stoop to gather the gold he throws among them.*]

YOUNG LEPER (*rushes at him;* IWEIN *holds him back*).
Thou! Thou!

IWEIN. Who art thou that insults us thus?

10TH LEPER. Thou! Hold thy tongue, else will Iwein give thee
So sound a drubbing that thou shalt fall dead
Upon the ground!

8TH LEPER. Iwein is strong!—He was
A mighty Lord!

STR. LEPER. Will ye not go?

1ST LEPER. Hark, thou,
This woman here is ours.

REDHAIRED LEPER (*thrusting a stick into* IWEIN'S *hand*).
Go, knock him down!

7TH LEPER. Come on!

[*The Strange Leper snatches the club from the feeble leper so that he falls, knocks* IWEIN *to the ground, and leaps into the crowd dealing fierce blows right and left. In his left hand he holds a sword which he does not use. In the following scene, also, the lepers' voices are hushed from fear and surprise.*]

STR. LEPER. There lies Iwein! Be off, ye dogs!

OLD LEPER. Ai! oh!

10TH LEPER. He's killed Iwein!

4TH LEPER. Lay hold of him!

7TH LEPER. Thou, Red One, seize him by the throat—I'll leap
Upon him from behind!

[*The Strange Leper knocks the Redhaired Leper down.*]

REDHAIRED LEPER. Help! Help!

STR. LEPER. There lies
Your Red One!

4TH LEPER. Fly! He has a sword!

11TH LEPER (*receiving a blow*). Oh help!

OLD LEPER. Come, brothers, let us run.

6TH LEPER (*struck*). Oh, oh!

STR. LEPER. Away
With you! Be off!

7TH LEPER (*struck*). Ai! Ai!

[*Some of the lepers try to carry away the wounded as they run.*]

YOUNG LEPER. Let's carry off
Iwein! Come, pick him up.

1ST LEPER. And Godwin too!
Make haste!

11TH LEPER (*struck*). Oh help!

STR. LEPER (*driving the whole troup to the gate*).
Back, curs, back to your holes!
Crawl back into your noisome dens!
7TH LEPER (*struck*). Oh! 'tis
Beelzebub himself!
10TH LEPER. The devil!
9TH LEPER. Hold!
12TH LEPER. We go! We go!
6TH LEPER. King Mark shall punish thee!
STR. LEPER (*throwing the club after them*).
Here, take your crutch and flee, ye curs!
VOICES OF THE LEPERS (*outside*). Oh, oh!—
He wounded me!—Fly!—Fly!—

SCENE V

The Strange Leper, whose hood has fallen back during the conflict, goes quickly to the foot of the steps. His forehead is bound with a narrow band. ISEULT *stands motionless with closed eyes.*

STR. LEPER. Iseult!
(*Anxiously, wonderingly and imploringly.*)
Iseult!
ISEULT (*throws back her head, shuddering. She keeps her eyes closed. Slowly and heavily.*)
Thou beast! Thou dog!
STR. LEPER. Iseult! 'Tis I who call!
ISEULT (*hastily, as though to cover herself with the words*).
I beg thee, beast, thou evil beast, speak not!
If in thy loathsome carcass there still dwells
Some remnant of a man, I pray thee slay
Me, but speak not!
STR. LEPER (*uncertainly*). Iseult!
[*He falls on his knees opposite the steps, but at a distance from them; and leans back until his thighs rest upon his heels.*]
ISEULT. Speak not! Be still,
And kill me now! They've left me not so much
As one small pin with which to kill myself!

Behold! I kneel to thee, and like some low
And humble maid, I beg thee, beast, to kill
Me, and I'll bless thee!

STR. LEPER. Oh, Iseult, dost thou
No longer love Lord Tristram who was once
Thy friend?

ISEULT (*stares at him for a moment*).
Thou speak'st, thou speak'st, thou beast, and star'st!
Yet God shall punish thee since, though I beg,
Thou would'st not kill me now!

STR. LEPER (*crying out despairinly*). Iseult, awake!
Oh Golden One, 'tis Tristram calls!

ISEULT. Thou seekst
With scorn and biting words to martyr me,
And kill me then! Oh say that thou wilt kill
Me afterward — when thou hast railed enough!
—And thou wilt come no nearer than thou art?

STR. LEPER. Iseult, awake! Awake, Iseult, and speak,
And tell me if thou lovest Tristram still!

ISEULT. Ah, he was once my friend! Why dost thou use
The dagger of his name to prick my heart?
I loved him once, and 'tis for that I stand
Here! — Kill me now!

STR. LEPER (*going to the foot of the steps*).
God help me! Hear me speak,
Iseult, for I'm —
(*His voice breaks with a sigh.*)
I'm Tristram's messenger!
Thine erstwhile friend — Him whom thou loved'st!

ISEULT (*angrily*). Would'st shame
Me in my shame? Thou beast!

STR. LEPER. I wish to save
Thee now. Dost thou love Tristram still?

LT (*going down a few steps, slowly and carefully*).
Thou art
A messenger of his? — And dost thou come,
Perchance, to take me to him?
(*Breaking out.*)
Does thy Lord
Desire me, to give me as a gift
From some strange land, to his new bride?
[*The Strange Leper hides his face in his hands.*]
Am I
To sit within a cage and watch him kiss
Her? Listen to him call his wife "Iseult?"
Was this his sweet design, or does Iseult
The Snowy Handed crave my golden hair
To make a pillow for voluptuous hours?
How strange that Tristram should so long for me
That he sends forth his messengers! And will
He lay us both within the self-same bed?
Caress and kiss us both at once throughout
The night's long, heavy hours? In other days
More modest was thy Lord in his desires.
(*Passionately.*)
Now kill me, kill me, beast! I've lived enough.

LEPER. Iseult, dost thou not know me yet?

LT. How should
I know thee, beast, or in what roadside ditch
Lord Tristram found thee as he fled away
This morning through the Morois from a man
Who called upon him in my name?

LEPER. Oh, judge
Him not too quickly, Queen Iseult! He stood
And waited for the man, who in thy name
Had called!

ISEULT (*in fierce anger*).

He stood, say'st thou? Why then
He has not wed Iseult, white handed Queen?
I dreamed it all, and sobbed but in my dreams,
Perhaps? 'Twas then dream-tears I wept at this
Report?

STR. LEPER. Be merciful to Tristram, Queen!

[ISEULT *descends a few more steps; looks at him searchingly, and speaks, in a way, questioningly.*]

ISEULT. Wast thou his servant while he still was true,
And caught'st the plague while on his wedding trip?
Then weep for him, thou poor diseasèd beast!
I know thee not. And if thy master stood
Here too,—Lord Tristram, whom I once did love
And who returned my love in youthful years—
If he now stood before me here, I should
Not recognize his face behind the mask
Of cowardice which he has worn of late.
His faithlessness sticks to him like black slime!
Go tell him that!—I hate him in this mask!
He was so loving and so true when first
I knew and loved him! God shall punish him!

STR. LEPER. Iseult, great God has punished him enough;
His soul is writhing in its agony
Before thy feet!

ISEULT. His soul is leprous, ay!
And 'tis an awful thing when one's own soul
Is leprous grown!—I loathe and hate him now!

STR. LEPER (*leaping up*).
Iseult!

ISEULT (*wildly*). Go call the vultures, call them forth!
I want to dance in their white arms, and flee
From Tristram's leprous soul that has betrayed
And shamed me thus!

STR. LEPER. May God in mercy help
Him, for he loves thee still, Iseult, in life
And death! [*He starts toward the gate.*]

VOICE OF LORD DENOVALIN.
Let none go out! Draw up the bridge,
And close the castle gates! I'll catch the hound!
[ISEULT *staggers a few steps and collapses.*]

STR. LEPER. Denovalin, Iseult! Our hated foe
Denovalin! Quick, hide thy nakedness
Within this cloak!
[*He covers her with his cloak and bends over her.*]
Dear lady I will kill
This man and then myself!
(DENOVALIN *enters.*)

DENOVALIN. Thou, there! Who art
Thou? Speak, thou hound! Who dares thus brazenly
To set at naught King Mark's decreed commands?

STR. LEPER (*who has sprung upon the curbing of the wall*).
Denovalin, a second time thou shalt
Not flee from me!—Take heed, and guard thyself!
[*He springs at* DENOVALIN *and overthrows him. He then swings himself up on the wall and stands there for a second; his leper's garment is thrown back and he appears in a coat of silver mail, shining in the sunlight.*]

DENOVALIN. Tristram of Lyonesse!

STR. LEPER (*pulling his cloth from his head*).
Dost recognize
Him by the stroke? God help me now!
[*He leaps down from the wall. The stage remains for a time empty. The organ sounds; the gates are opened and two guards stand on either side of the steps. The church is gradually emptied.*]

SCENE VI

A SOLDIER (*in subdued tones*). What? Dost
Thou weep, Forzin?
2D SOLDIER. I'm not ashamed! There's none
But weeps, save Mark alone! The very stones
Must weep!
1ST SOLDIER. It makes me shudder when I think
Of it.
2D SOLDIER. Come, come, let's all go home.
A GIRL. Oh hark!
Methought I heard one moan!
2D GIRL. Oh God! Behold!
Here lies the Queen!
3D GIRL. They've murdered her!
1ST SOLDIER (*running to the spot*). The Queen!
2D SOLDIER. My God!
1ST SOLDIER. The King doth call!
A MAN. She lives no more.
3D GIRL. Here lies another!
1ST SOLDIER (*running up*). Lord Denovalin!
Stone dead!
A VOICE. Who? Where?
2D SOLDIER. He bleeds and does not move!
PARANIS (*rushes up and throws himself down beside* ISEULT).
Oh God! My queen!
1ST SOLDIER (*pulling him away*). Stand back there, boy!

PARANIS. Oh let
Me kneel beside the Queen!—I always did!
Oh, Queen Iseult, how pale thou art!—But, see,
She breathes!

2D SOLDIER. The Queen still breathes!

PARANIS. She is not dead!

A GIRL. Go call it out within that all may come,
She is not dead!

A KNIGHT. Why shout ye so?

A BOY. Behold,
The lepers would not have Iseult!

2D BOY. Proclaim
It round about!

A MAN. Be still, here comes the King!
Make room!

[MARK *comes down the steps and stops on the last one, motionless and staring.*]

1ST SOLDIER. King Mark, here lies the Queen Iseult.
She breathes, but shows no signs of life.

2D SOLDIER. And here
Lies Lord Denovalin. He's dead, King Mark.

[MARK *leans against a column to support himself and stares down upon the scene. The crowd groups itself and throngs the door of the church behind him.*]

GIMELLA. What's this?

A BOY. The lepers would not have Iseult.

A GIRL (*to* GIMELLA).
Here lies the Queen!

A MAN. Untouched and pure!

A WOMAN. A great,
And wondrous thing!—A judgment from the sky!

GIMELLA. No one has touched her, see!

A VOICE. Is she asleep?

A MAN. See, one has wrapped her in a cloak!

SHEPHERD (*calling aloud*). The cloak
Shall hang within the church!
A GIRL. Brangaene, come!
She's smiling through her tears.
BRANGAENE (*bending over* ISEULT—*softly*).
Oh dear Iseult!
Belovèd one!
GIMELLA. She breathes as feverishly
And deep as does a sick and suffering child
At midnight in its sleep!
1ST SOLDIER. I'll to the gate
And ask the guards if they have seen some sign
Or token how this miracle occur'd!
MARK (*cries angrily*).
I'll crucify the man who asks!
[*All heads turn then in his direction and a terrified expression comes over all countenances.* MARK *speaks harshly and calmly.*]
Dinas
Of Lidan? Is he here?
1ST GUARD. Lord Dinas left
The castle gate today at dawn, my Lord.
MARK. Did Lord Denovalin receive his wound
In front, or from behind?
1ST SOLDIER. Here, at the throat.
The wound is small and deep, as though a shaft
Of lightning struck him there between the helm
And gorget—sharp and swift.
VOICES. Oh listen! See,
'Twas God that struck Denovalin, since he
Had falsely testified against the Queen!
MARK. Then let the executioner strip off
His arms, and hang them in my armory,

So that the sun shall shine thereon. The corpse
Shall he bind to a horse's tail, and drag
It o'er the common land and let it rot!
Where lies the Queen!

SHEPHERD. Stand back there, for King Mark
Would see the Queen in her pale beauty! Back!

[*The crowd stands back and a space is cleared around* ISEULT. MARK *looks down upon her from above and speaks coldly and slowly, controlling himself.*]

MARK. Let Queen Iseult be carried on that cloak
Within the castle. Place her there upon
Soft pillows. Strew fresh flowers round about
Her bed, and moisten all her robes and clothes
With sweetest perfumes. Kneel ye down and pray
When she doth speak to you, for she must be
In some way sacred, since God loves her thus.
(*Almost shouting.*)
And if she should be found in Tristram's bed
I'll kill the man who tells me of it, ay,
And let his body rot upon the ground!
Now saddle me a horse that I may go
To seek Lord Dinas, my most loyal friend!

ACT IV

The High Vaulted Hall of the Castle.—In the middle of the hall on the left opens a high, wooden staircase. In the background on the left, bay-windows; on the right, a broad, barred door. Through the grating one sees the outer court. In the middle of the wall on the right is a wide fireplace on each side of which jut out low stone benches. In front of the windows stands a table at which DINAS *and* GANELUN, *the First and Second Barons, are playing chess. In the foreground, a table on which chess-boards stand prepared for play. The table by the stone-bench stands on a dais which is shut off from behind by a*

railing. On the dais and on the floor are carpets. Servants take wine-flagons from a sideboard which stands on the left beside the stairs, and place them in front of the players. In front of the raised table UGRIN, *the King's Jester, is asleep. The oil-torches give only a dim light. For a moment the players continue their game in silence.*

SCENE I

1ST BARON. Take heed unto thy queen, Lord Ganelun,
Unless thou willingly dost sacrifice
Her to my pawns, as Mark gave Queen Iseult
Unto his lepers!

GANELUN. Wait! for see, I move
My bishop back.

2D BARON. Check! Dinas, check and mate!
Thou mad'st it easy, friend. Thou never shouldst
Have sacrificed the knight, for thus my rook
Escaped, attacking thee.

DINAS. Forgive; my thoughts
Were troubled, ay, and wandered from the game.

[*Two knights come in from the courtyard.*]

1ST KNIGHT. I cannot make one ray of sense from all
These strange occurrences, my Lords! I greet
Thee, Ganelun!

[*Shakes hands with the Barons.*]

2D KNIGHT (*shaking hands*).
At chess! At chess my Lords!
Your blood must run full slowly in your veins!

[*Comes forward.*]

GANELUN. King Mark has bid us play, and order'd wine
For us to drink, since otherwise 'twould be
A dull and sombre evening here tonight
Within the castle hall, for Queen Iseult,
I ween, will stay in her retirement.

1ST KNIGHT. King Mark bade us come hither too.

UGRIN. "Oh God!
Men! Men! Bring lights and let me see the face
Of human beings 'round about!" So cried
My cousin Mark not half an hour agone,
As one on whom the mirth of loneliness
Falls all too heavily!

2D BARON. What think ye, Lords,
Of this most wondrous thing?

2D KNIGHT. And do ye know
That Kaad, King Mark's old stable groom, beheld
St. George leap from the battlement where wall
And rock drop off an hundred fathom sheer?
[*The Barons stand up and crowd about him.*]

1ST BARON. St. George?

GANELUN. What's that thou say'st?

DINAS. Dost thou know more?

2D KNIGHT. I know but what old Kaad himself recounts;
That, as he led Mark's charger down to drink,
There suddenly appeared before his eyes
The lofty shape of good St. George, erect,
Upon the wall!

1ST BARON (*crossing himself*). God save my soul!

2D BARON. And then?
What happened then?

2D KNIGHT. Kaad thought at first
He was some mortal man and cried to him
To heed; but in that selfsame moment leapt
The holy knight, and cleared the wall, and fell
The hundred fathoms. But when Kaad ran up,
With all the speed he might unto the spot,
St. George had vanished and had left no trace.

1ST BARON. No trace?

2D BARON. 'Tis strange!

DINAS. A wondrous thing!

GANELUN. But say,
By what did Kaad first recognize the saint?
2D KNIGHT. I know not, but he says 'twas he; and all
The people are rejoicing at this new
And wondrous miracle of good St. George.
1ST KNIGHT. What says King Mark about this miracle,
This saving of the Queen by God Himself?
Hast seen him, Dinas?
DINAS (*returning to the table*). Ay, his heart and mind
Are heavy and his soul distressed.
2D KNIGHT. And Queen
Iseult?
1ST KNIGHT. What said the King of her?
GANELUN. The King
Refused to see her, or to speak with her,
Since neither dares to speak of this foul deed
Which has occurred; its memory still throbs,
And tingling flows throughout their blood.
2D BARON. And yet
He sent the Queen, and without message too,
The head that pledged a perjured oath today,
Upon a silver shield. And well he did.
2D KNIGHT. My Lord Denovalin a victim fell
Unto a saintly and a holy hand,
But died ingloriously!
DINAS. As he deserved
So died he, Sir.

[*The Barons and Knights sit down again at the table. King* MARK, *unnoticed by the others, comes slowly down the steps, and walks about. He is oppressed and agitated. At length he stops, and, leaning against the end post of the bannister, listens to the conversation of the others.*]

1ST KNIGHT. A leper has been stoned
Because he cried throughout Lubin that 'twas
The devil who had done the thing.

DINAS. Such leaps
By God or devil can alone be done.
GANELUN. 'Tis true, my Lords, no mortal man can spring
An hundred fathoms.
[MARK *steps up to the table and lays his arm about* DINAS' *neck.*]

SCENE II

MARK. True, Lord Ganelun!
2D BARON (*springing up*).
The King!
1ST BARON. The King here! Pardon, sire!
MARK. I thank
You all, my Lords, that ye were not enraged
And angered at a weak old man, and came
Again to me. I would not willingly
Have spent this night alone.
2D BARON. Most cheerfully
We came. The Queen's miraculous escape
O'erjoys us all.
1ST BARON. There lack but three to make
The tale complete; those three, my Lords, who stood
As sponsors of the bond.
MARK. They're coursing through
The gloomy forest paths and seek to catch
That which, since God hath spoken, cannot be
Therein. I've sent my riders to recall
Them here to me.
GANELUN. Give me thy hand, King Mark,
For I am glad that thou didst err!
MARK (*his voice is bitter and despairing*). I, too,
Am glad, for if this morning I appeared
A wreckless youth, a foolish boy who dared
In arrogant presumption to assert
Himself and to rebel against your word,
Forgive me. Passion is the heritage
Of man; his deeds the natural consequence

Of passion. Think ye not the same? And see,
How God, now for the second time, has wrought,
And sternly proved the truth! Is it, perchance,
His will that I should learn unseeingly,
Unquestioningly to revere His stars
On which our actions here on earth depend?
What think ye, sirs? for so it seems to me;
And therefore hath He hid from me that which
Most eagerly I wish to know, so that
Before this veiled uncertainty, my blood
Ran riot in my veins. But from this day
I'll change my mode of life; I will regard
My blindness and His unavoidable
Decree; for wisdom lies in piety,
As says an ancient proverb; hence I will,
From this day on, learn piety that I
Become a very sage for wisdom.

[*Goes away.*]

A KNIGHT. Calm
Thyself!

UGRIN (*calling to* MARK). Ay, cousin, make thyself a monk!

MARK (*turning back*).
And I will learn to laugh at God that He
Should give Himself such trouble for a man
Like me—poor fool! Enough! Forgive my wrongs
In friendly wise, as I will overlook
Your sins with all my heart. But, if a man
Grown lately wise may counsel you, sin not;
Your work is the beginning, God's the end.

UGRIN (*calling out to him*).
Amen.

MARK. I've broken in upon your game
My friends, and chattered on. Forgive it me;

Resume your play and cups; drink on, I pray.
[*He goes over to* UGRIN.]
Thy jokes are empty of all wit today,
Ugrin.

IN. My wit has fallen off, say'st thou?
Decay of time, believe me Mark; for wit
Is wine, and wine is poured into a cup
Of sparkling gold, and not into a crack'd
Old jug, and thou, illustrious cousin, art
Become a broken pot since noon today!
[*Hands him his jester's sceptre.*]
Here, hit thyself! Behold the ring is gone!
My wit's too precious for a ringless cup.
At Easter tide I'll seek me out as lord
Some jovial soul who loves his wine; who plays
Wild pranks, and gives his wife away when he
Is tired of her!

RK (*sitting down on the stone bench*).
Friend Ugrin, I warn
Thee, heed thy tongue!

IN. Ay, cousin! Ay, 'twere best
Since thou'st forsworn all quarreling!

RK. I wish
That I might put thee on the rack and have
Thee whipped before I go to rest! Instead
I'll give thee two broad marks of gold if thou
Can'st move Iseult to laughter; and I'll give
Besides the gold a brand-new cloak to wear
In winter time!

IN. Well lined?

RK (*takes him by both ears*). I've set my heart
Upon it that Iseult shall laugh, so do
Thy best, my friend!

IN (*stands up*). With some well-chosen words,
Perhaps, I briefly might describe to her
The leper's throng! What say'st thou, cousin?

MARK. Fool!

UGRIN. Or I might ask her what it's like when one's
Own husband, from unfeeling jealousy,
Ordains one to be burnt; or yet again
I might, with due solemnity, implore
Her to be kind—to love thee once again,
Good cousin! Surely she must laugh at that!

MARK. Peace, fool! Thou weariest me.

UGRIN. If thou intend
To grow thy beard in this new way I'll turn
Thy barber! I shall serve thee better then
Than now as fool! What say'st to this?

MARK. Oh fool,
If only thou wast not a fool!

UGRIN (*noticing* ISEULT *at the head of the stairs*). No fool
So great as thou thyself! Behold her now,
The woman whom thou gav'st away! Oh fie!
Fool cousin, art thou not ashamed?
(*Sinks to his knees and calls out.*)
The Queen
Approaches! Queen Iseult!

SCENE III

The Knights and Barons rise; MARK *springs up and steps back a pace.* ISEULT *remains standing on the bottom step.* BRANGAENE, GIMELLA *and* PARANIS *are behind her.*

ISEULT. I beg of you,
My Lords, consider what is past as 'twere
A dream, since otherwise we could not find
Fit words or proper sentiments to stand
Before each other with unblushing cheek,
For very shame and horror at this deed.
[*She steps down into the hall.*]
My Lords, I bid you welcome, one and all!

GANELUN. I kiss thy mantle's hem, oh Queen!

1st Baron. So do
We all who stand before thee now. We feel
That thou art holy, Queen Iseult!

Iseult. Ye do
Me wrong in praising me too much, good friends.
I did but swear the truth and keep what I
Had sworn. Continue now your play. I would
Not hinder you!

[*She turns to* Mark; *both stare at each other for a moment and then* Iseult *speaks timidly, almost childishly.*]

I wish to play at chess
—With Mark and Dinas—that true, loyal friend—

Mark (*after a short pause, quietly and kindly*).
Play thou with Dinas first, since I, this morn,
Did interrupt thy game. I promised him
That he should play with thee.

[*He goes to the chest.*]

(*Breaking out.*)

I'll choose Ugrin
As my opponent! Come, Sir Fool, and play
With me! [*Sits down on the chest.*]

Iseult. So be it, Mark. Friend Dinas, come;
And thou Gimella play with Ganelun.

(*To* Brangaene.)

Stand thou beside me here and help me worst
Mine adversary. Come.

[*She seats herself with* Dinas *at the raised table.* Brangaene *stands beside the table and leans over the bannister.* Paranis *seats himself at* Iseult's *feet.* Gimella *takes her place at the other table. The Strange Jester slinks across the court*

and presses his pale, beardless face, drawn with suffering, against the bars of the grating. His head is shaved and his clothes are torn and ragged.]

UGRIN. Laugh at me, Queen.

ISEULT. Tell me, Ugrin, why should I laugh at thee?

UGRIN. I beg thee laugh; most fondly I implore
Thee laugh at me, Iseult. My cousin here
Hath promised me much gold if I can make
Thee laugh at me but once—I want that gold
So much!—Come, laugh at me, Iseult!

ISEULT. First earn
Thy gold, good fool. Be off and let us play.

UGRIN (*kneels down by* MARK *beside the chest*).
Thy wife's not in her sweetest mood today,
Good cousin. Know'st thou why perhaps?

MARK. A truce
To thy dull jokes! Come, play the game, Sir Knave!

ISEULT. I'll take thy castle, Dinas! Heed thy game.

UGRIN (*humming*).
Oh once there was a mighty King,
Who had a lady fair.
This King did love his beauteous dame
As though his wife she were—

ISEULT. Thy castle falls—
(*Softly.*)
I hardly see the squares!
They sway and rock like billows on the sea.

DINAS. Why weepest thou?

ISEULT. I am not happy, friend.

PARANIS (*softly*).
Oh God!—There, see! Through yonder window's bars
There peers a man.

DINAS. Where, boy?

PARANIS. There! There!

STR. JESTER (*calling through the grating*). Holla!
King Mark! Holla!

DINAS. What's that?

MARK (*rising*). Who storms outside
My door? Such noises in the night I will
Not brook! Who's there?

[UGRIN *runs to the grating.*]

STR. JESTER. A jester, King; a poor
And witless fool. Let me come in! I'll crack
New jokes to make thee laugh!—Let me come in.

UGRIN. A fool!

GIMELLA. How came he here?

BRANGAENE. He startled me!

ISEULT. Indeed we weary of Ugrin's stale jests.

STR. JESTER. I'm a poor jester that would come to thee,
So let me in, King Mark.

MARK (*going to the grating*). The fools, it seems,
Smell out my door as carrion-vultures smell
A corpse.

UGRIN. Cousin, let him be driven out!
I beg thee, have him whipped.

1ST GUARD (*from without*). I've caught thee, rogue!

MARK. How came this strange fool past the gates, Gilain?
Wast thou asleep?

1ST GUARD. King Mark, this man has slunk
About the gate since it grew dark. He says
He wants to see thee. Many times have we
Already driven him away, but still
He sticks like pitch about the gate.

STR. JESTER. I am
A jester from a foreign land—I wish
To come to thee, King Mark!

1ST GUARD. Behold the fool!
He cries like that unceasingly.

MARK. Speak, fool,
What need hast thou of me?

STR. JESTER. Mark, let me in!
I'll make such jests that thou, and all thy lords
And ladies die from laughing at my wit.

GIMELLA (*laughing*).
The merry jests!

ISEULT. This wandering knave intrudes
Too boldly!

UGRIN. Rogue! Oh shameless one. I'll give
Thee such a drubbing as thou ne'er hast felt.

MARK. Know'st thou, in truth, new jests.

STR. JESTER. Ay, Mark, new jests
To make thee laugh or weep. Ay, merry jests!

SCENE IV

MARK opens the grating and lets the Strange Jester in. The Jester advances a few feet on the right, and stops to stare at ISEULT. *UGRIN walks about him, examining him.*

MARK. Then come, thou jail-bird. Hark, Gilain, let now
The guard be doubled at the lower gate
That none, unnoticed, may come in.

STR. JESTER. But should
A stranger King arrive,—a stranger King,
The master of this stranger fool—let him
Come in, Gilain.

ISEULT. Play, Dinas, play thy game!
Their chatter wearies me.

MARK. Now tell me, rogue,
Why clamorest thou so loudly at my gate?
What wouldst thou? Speak.

STR. JESTER. I wish to stay with thee.
[*Laughter.*]

2D BARON. What cooked they in thy kitchen, Mark, tonight
That all the fools have smelt it out?

STR. JESTER. I saw
The fire glowing in thy hall; I saw
The light and so I came—I'm cold.

UGRIN. Then wrap
Thyself more closely in thy cloak, thou fool!

STR. JESTER. I've given it away.

BRANGAENE (*laughing*). It seems thou art
A tender hearted fool!

GIMELLA. And yet it does
Not seem as though thou couldst give much
away!

MARK (*looking at the fool carefully*).
Whence comest thou, Sir Fool!

STR. JESTER. I come from there—
From there outside, from nowhere else—
(*Looking at* ISEULT *and in a soft voice—almost singing.*)
And yet
My mother was Blanchefleur!
[ISEULT *starts and stares across at him.*]

MARK (*goes back laughing to his seat.* UGRIN *follows him*).
Ha! ha! The jest
Is poor. Hast thou no better ones, my friend?
Blanchefleur was mine own sister. She begat
No fool like thee!

STR. JESTER. 'Twas then some other one
Who bore the self-same name and me the pain
And sorrow, Mark. What matters it to thee?
[*Laughter.*]

1ST KNIGHT (*laughingly*).
Our jesting rogue grows bitter in his mirth!

ISEULT. Let this strange jester stand a little forth
That we may see him in the light.

MARK. Come here,
Sir Fool, and stand before the Queen.

UGRIN. He is
An ass as awkward as I e'er beheld!
So cousin, judge by contrast 'twixt us two,
And see the priceless thing thou hast in me!

MARK. Go, fool, be not afraid.

STR. JESTER (*steps in front of the stone bench on the left, opposite* ISEULT'S *table*).
—I'm cold!—I'm cold!

ISEULT (*after looking at him for a moment breaks into a clear and relieved laugh*).
A sorry sight to look upon!
[*The Strange Jester hides his face in his hands.*]

GIMELLA (*springing forward*). The Queen
Is laughing—see!

BRANGAENE. Made he some witty jest?

GIMELLA. Why laughst thou so, Iseult?

DINAS. 'Tis horrible
To see the fool's distorted face!

ISEULT. He looks
So pitifully at me! it makes me laugh!

UGRIN. I'm angry with thee, Queen Iseult! Oh fie!
For shame, how couldst thou laugh at that strange fool?
(*Turning to* MARK.)
I pray thee, Mark, good cousin, wilt thou give
To him the two whole marks of gold?
[*During this time the Strange Jester sits on the railing which joins the bench to the fireplace. He rests his elbows on his knees and his face on his hands. He stares at* ISEULT.]

BRANGAENE. Rejoice!
The King will give thee a reward since thou
Hast cheered the Queen.

STR. JESTER (*without changing his attitude*).
Would that I'd make her weep,
This Queen, instead of laugh!
[*Soft and low laughter.*]
MARK. How's that?
STR. JESTER. Because
I am a fool for sorrow, not for mirth!
[*Laughter; the fool springs up.*]
And none shall laugh when he beholds my face!
[*Laughter; the fool seats himself again.*]
ISEULT (*earnestly*).
How strangely speaks the fool!
MARK. My friend, I think,
That some one cut thee from the gallows!
STR. JESTER (*stares at* ISEULT—*slowly*). Mark,
How proud and cold a wife thou hast! Her name's
Iseult, I think. Am I not right?
MARK (*smiling*). Doth she
Please thee, Sir Fool?
STR. JESTER. Ay! ay! She pleases me.
[*Laughter.*]
Iseult the Goldenhaired!—I'm cold, King Mark!
ISEULT. The fool is mad!—I like him not.
UGRIN (*to the Strange Jester*). Thou hast
Thine answer now!
GIMELLA. Is this the first time thou
Beheldst the Queen?
MARK. Art thou a stranger, friend?
STR. JESTER. Mayhap I've seen the Queen before; mayhap
I never have.—I know not, Mark.
[*Laughter.*]
GIMELLA (*laughing*). A strange
And curious jest, i' faith!
(*To those laughing at the other table.*)
Come here, my Lords,
For this new jester is most wondrous strange.

STR. JESTER (*in rising grief*).
I had a sweetheart once, and she was fair!
MARK (*laughing*).
Ay! I believe thee, friend!
STR. JESTER. Yea, she was fair,
Almost as fair as Queen Iseult, thy wife.
[*Laughter.*]
I'm cold!
ISEULT (*angrily*). Thou fool, why starest thou at me?
Avaunt!
STR. JESTER. Laugh once again at me, Iseult!
Thy laugh was fair, and yet, methinks, those eyes
Must be still fairer when they overflow
With tears.—I wish that I could make thee weep,
Iseult! [*A silence.*]
UGRIN (*going over to him*).
Ho, ho! Are those thy jokes? I'll fall
A weeping straight, thou croaking raven!
STR. JESTER (*springing up*). Take
This fool away, or else I'll smite him dead!
[UGRIN *jumps backward.*]
MARK. Thou art a gloomy jester, boy!
GIMELLA. His jests
Are all of some new fangled sort.
MARK. Speak, fool,
Whom hast thou served till now?
STR. JESTER. I've served King Mark
In far off Cornwall—. [*Laughter.*]
And he had a wife,
And she was fair, with long and golden hair!
[*Laughter.*]
Why laughst thou Dinas, friend?
[*The laughter dies suddenly; the Barons and Knights, who, with the exception of*

those at the Queen's table, had formed a circle around the Strange Jester, shrink back.]

NAS (*startled*). My God! He knows
My name as well!

BARON. 'Tis passing strange!

BARON. Thou!—Fool—!

NELUN. He's quick, and makes good use of what he hears!

ULT. His jests are impudent,—I wish that he
Would go away! He wearies me.

RK. And yet
There's something in the knave that pleases me.
His madness lies still deeper than it seems—

RIN. Ay, cousin, in his belly, for, methinks,
He has a stomachache!

RK. Come, friend, tell us
A tale.

. JESTER (*starting up*). Why stare ye so at me, ye pack
Of rogues? Why mock ye me?
(*In anguish.*)
I'm but a fool!
A wretched fool! Send them away, King Mark,
And listen thou to me. We'll stay here all
Alone:—the Queen, and thou, and I, and then
I'll tell thee pretty things, sweet things,—so sweet
That one must shiver when one hears! Now send
Away the rest!

BARON. Take heed, Sir Fool, be not
Too bold.

BARON. He should be soundly beaten!

RK. Leave
Him, Lords, in peace. I like his foolishness,
Because he does not crack the silly jokes
That other jesters do.

STR. JESTER. I, too, was once
As good a knight as they — ! [*Laughter.*]
GANELUN (*laughing*). I wish I'd seen
Thee, knave!
STR. JESTER (*steadily*).
Thou saw'st me many times and wast
My friend, Lord Ganelun!
[*All step back nervously.*]
1ST KNIGHT (*crossing himself*). God save us, friends!
He knows us all by name!
ISEULT. A gruesome fool!
Send him away, King Mark; he's mad.
MARK. Speak on!
STR. JESTER. My tongue cleaves to my gums; my throat is parch'd!
Give me to drink.
MARK (*stands up and takes a goblet from the table*).
I had forgot, poor fool!
But thou shalt drink wine from a golden cup.
Thy foolishness has touched my heart. At times,
My Lords, 'twould be an easy thing to turn
To such a fool. Iseult! Come pledge the cup
That he may have somewhat of which to dream
On cold and thirsty nights. Grant him this boon. [*He gives* ISEULT *the cup.*]
ISEULT. I pledge —
STR. JESTER (*jumping down from the bench*).
Drink not! Drink not! — She drank!
[*He waves aside the cup.*]
I will
Not drink.
GIMELLA. A brazen knave!
BRANGAENE. Fie, fie! For shame!
STR. JESTER. I'll not drink with a woman from one cup
The self-same wine again.
MARK. What hinders thee?

STR. JESTER. Ask Queen Iseult.
ISEULT (*angrily and fearfully*).
Oh Mark! He mocks me. Send
The fool away!
STR. JESTER (*he throws himself on the ground before the dais and whispers low and tensely to* ISEULT).
"For they who drink thereof
Together, so shall love with every sense
Alive, yet senseless — with their every thought,
Yet thoughtless, too, in life, in death, for aye —
Yet he, who having known the wond'rous bliss
Of that intoxicating cup of love,
Spits out the draught disloyally, shall be
A homeless and a friendless worm,— a weed
That grows beside the road"— So spake my love,
And handed me a golden cup of wine
And bade me drink,— But evil came thereof—.
[*During his speech* ISEULT *sits up in her chair, and bending backward, stares down at him in horror.*]
PARANIS. The Queen turns pale!
BRANGAENE. Iseult! My God! Iseult!
GANELUN. He conjures!
1ST BARON. 'Twas a magic spell!
2D KNIGHT. Lay hold
Of him! He is a conjurer.
[*A few men start to seize the jester — he jumps upon the bench.*]
ISEULT (*trembling with fright*). Excuse —
My weakness — 'tis — 'tis but — let be — this fool's
Strange jesting is most ghastly — it revolts my soul
And — made me faint —.
MARK. Thou knave! I'll have thee whipped!
Tell me thy name — Who art thou? Speak!

STR. JESTER. Come not
Too near!

MARK. I have a dungeon deep and strong,
And I can have thee thrown to Husdent. He
Will tear thee limb from limb, thou conjurer!
Who art thou?

UGRIN (*in a friendly tone*).
Answer, friend, our Cousin Mark
Speaks not in jest!

MARK. Call in the guards!
[*A Knight tries to lay hold of the Strange Jester.*]

STR. JESTER. Let go!
I'm but a wretched fool!—I have no name!
What matters it to you? I've smirched my good
And noble name—so now I have no name.
I had one once that rang full true and high!
I've twisted it about, and broken it!
(*In rising agitation.*)
I broke my name, and throwing up the bits
I caught them as they fell, and threw them up
Again; and so I played with my fair name
Until the fragments rang again and fell
At last back to my hand, deformed and changed,
To stick, and make a name that is no name—
So call me Tramtris.

ISEULT. —Tramtris—!
[UGRIN *claps his hands and rolls laughing on the ground.*]

MARK. Fool, what ails
Thee now?

UGRIN. The jester jesteth. Seest thou not?
Why, turn it 'round! Tramtris—Tristram! He says
He was Lord Tristram! Ho! [*Laughter.*]

GANELUN. That was the jest
That he so cunningly devised!

1ST BARON. This shaft
Of irony has struck the mark and hits
This day and thee, King Mark!
2D KNIGHT. A clever fool!
MARK (*laughing softly*).
I wish Lord Tristram saw the knave!
2D BARON. He'd laugh!
ISEULT (*trembling with anger*).
Let not thy nephew Tristram's knightly fame
And noble name serve as a mockery
To such a ghoul!
MARK (*gaily*). Forgive me, fair Iseult;
And yet it makes me laugh to think that this
Poor fool went mad from thinking that he was
My noble nephew Tristram. Speak, thou toy of fate,
Wast thou Lord Tristram once?
STR. JESTER (*almost timidly*). Ay, Mark, I was;
And often was I with Iseult, thy wife!
Forgive it me! [*Laughter.*]
ISEULT. Dost thou permit that he
Should heap such insults on thy wife's fair name?
MARK (*gaily*).
Heed not his words; the people love such jests.
(*To the jester.*)
Give us a sign, Sir Fool.
UGRIN. A sign! A sign!
1ST BARON. Ay, let the fool describe the Queen. Give ear.
UGRIN. 'Twill be a royal sport! And first he shall
Describe her feet! Speak on!
[UGRIN *sits on the ground.* ISEULT *hides her face in* BRANGAENE'S *breast.*]
GIMELLA (*to* ISEULT *laughingly*). He'll liken thee
Unto his wench!
MARK. Why dost thou hesitate?
I grant thee jester's freedom, Fool. Begin!

STR. JESTER (*softly and hesitatingly*).
From pedestals white snowy columns rise
Of ivory, draped in softly whispering silk,
That arched, and all immaculate, stretch up,—
The swelling pillars of her body's frame—

MARK. A graceful speech, my friend. Canst thou go on?

STR. JESTER (*in rising agitation and feverish emotion*).
Her body is a gleam of silvery light
Cast by the full moon in the month of May
Changed to the snowy marvel of herself.
Thou art a garden wild wherein there grow
Deep purple fruits that stupefy and yet
That make one burn! Thy body is a church
Of rarest marble built—a fairy mount
Where sounds the music of a golden harp;
A field of virgin snow! Thy breasts are buds
Of the most sacred plant that flowering grows
Within the garden,—swelling fruits that wait
To suck the honeyed dew of summer moons!
Thy neck is like a lily's stem! Thy arms
Are like the blossoming branches of a young
And tender almond-tree, directing us
Within that Paradise where rules the chaste
Perfection of thy rounded limbs, enthroned
Within thy wondrous body like a God
Who threatens from on high. Thou art—

MARK. Oh hear
How this impostor talks! The token, fool!

STR. JESTER (*softly, trembling and feverishly*).
Below the left breast of this master-piece
Of His creation God has set his mark—
A darkened cross—!

MARK (*hoarsely*). O seize the knave! The cross
Is there.—She bears the mark!

GANELUN. Christ save my soul!
1ST BARON. I feel an awful dread of this strange fool!
1ST KNIGHT (*drawing*).
I'll run him through the body with my sword!
STR. JESTER (*tears the sword from his hand, and springs upon the bench*).
Take heed unto thyself! Come not too near!
I'll tear thee like a beast.
ISEULT. His words are not
So marvelously strange. Hast thou forgot,
King Mark, that once, before a heaped up pyre
Thou bad'st me stand, stark naked and exposed
Unto the rabble's gaze? It well may be
That this low jester cast his shaming eyes
Upon me then.
MARK. Saw'st thou the Queen when she
Stood on the burning pile?
STR. JESTER. I saw the Queen;
I stood beside her there!
GIMELLA. Behold, that sight
Has made him lose his wits!
BRANGAENE. Poor witless fool!
STR. JESTER. Glare not at me! I'm but a fool, a poor
Mad fool — a wretched fool that wished to tell
You tales to make you laugh!
(*Almost screaming.*)
For God's sake laugh!
[*He throws the sword down. It falls clattering on the floor. The First Guard enters while two others stand outside the grating with the Strange Knight.*]
MARK. Whom bring'st thou there?
1ST GUARD. King Mark, thy messengers
Have found the witnesses that signed the bond
Too late, for in the forest they had caught
A man whom they have sent to thee. The man

Is wounded; when they called on him to stand
He fled. His horse fell dead. They know him not.
He is a stranger in the land.

MARK. How heavily
God's wrath descends upon my head. This blood
I've spilled was innocent!

1ST GUARD. This man is near
His end; his dying wish is to behold
The Queen Iseult. He much desires it.

GIMELLA. Poor soul!

MARK. Bring in the man. How things mischance!
My castle is a gruesome place today.
An idiot first, and then a corpse have knocked
To crave admittance to my hall! My Lords,
I pray you to forgive my sins.

PARANIS. There comes
The wounded Knight.

[*The Strange Knight is led before* ISEULT. *He walks firmly, standing erect.*]

STR. KNIGHT. —Art thou Iseult?—Iseult
The Goldenhaired? May God be merciful
Unto thy soul!

STR. JESTER (*crouches on the bench, taking no interest in what is said*). My brother Kuerdin!
Dear friend! In a disastrous hour went
We forth. I pity thee!

[*The Strange Knight turns and looks at him searchingly.*]

GANELUN (*angrily and oppressed*). Will death not close
Thy mouth, thou cur!

MARK. Dost thou then know this man?

STR. JESTER. I've said so, Mark! I'll sit beside him here
Until he dies. I'll be his priest.

KARL HAIDER

APPROACHING THUNDERSTORM

STR. KNIGHT. Keep off.
This babbling fool; his chatter shames my death.

DINAS. Methinks this was the man I saw at dawn
Today as I rode through the wood, and yet
He bore a shield on which I thought I saw
Lord Tristram's arms.

MARK. Unhappy man, who art
Thou?

STR. KNIGHT (*calmly and quietly*).
One who knoweth how to die. Lay me
On yonder bench and wrap me in my cloak.
[*He is laid on the bench near the chimney, and lies there like an effigy.*]

MARK (*to the First Guard*).
Where are his shield and arms?

STR. KNIGHT. I bore the shield
Of Tristram, Lord of Lyonesse, since we,
For our great love, exchanged our arms. I am
His brother, for my sister is his wife.
Lord Tristram greets thee, Mark.

MARK (*to him passionately*). Speak, friend, and put
An end unto the quandary in which
I stand. God shall reward thee soon. Where is
Lord Tristram?

STR. KNIGHT (*groaning*).
With his wife whom he holds dear.

STR. JESTER. Thou liest, brother, yet thou speak'st the truth!

MARK. God mocks me, Lords! God mocks me!

STR. JESTER. I will watch
By him and guard his body through the night.

GANELUN. Be still, thou toad! Be still!

1ST GUARD. King Mark, the Knight
Upon his left hand wears a ring — a stone
Rich set in gold. Shall he retain the ring
Upon his hand? — He's dead.

STR. JESTER (*seizing the ring*). The ring is mine!
I gave it him!
GANELUN (*striking him*). Away! Thou damnèd thief!
STR. JESTER. The ring is mine, I say. My love once gave
It me and sware thereon; but now I'll give
It as a jester's gift unto the Queen.
I pray thee take the ring, Iseult.
[ISEULT *takes the ring, looks at it a moment and lets it fall. She totters.*]
Cast not
Away my gift!
BRANGAENE. Help! Help! The Queen.
ISEULT (*in great agitation*). Oh God,
I pray Thee open now mine eyes, and set
Me free! I know not if I am alive!
There lies a corpse—There stands a ghost and I
Between them here! I hear a moaning sound
Pass whimpering through the halls—!
[*She runs to the stairs.*]
Let me go up!
Brangaene, come, and thou Gimella, too!
[*Half way up the stairs she turns.*]
Be not too angry with me, Mark, for thou
Hast set a loathsome ghost to mock and jeer
At me to make thee laugh. He makes my heart
Grow cold with horror! Come, my ladies, come!
Stand by me now—this awful game has made
Me shudder. [*She hastens up the stairs.*]
STR. JESTER (*springs onto the table to look after her*).
Queen Iseult, thou fairest one,
Have pity on my leper's soul!
GANELUN. Be still,
Thou croaking raven!

1st Baron. Smite him dead and spit
Upon his corpse!
2d Baron. Thou filthy worm!
Mark. Lay hold
Upon the jester! Hold him fast. Thou fool,
Thou base-born cur, how dar'st thou vex my wife
So bitterly with thy presumptuous wit?
Str. Jester. Mark, heed thy words!
1st Knight (*catching his wrists from behind*).
I have the knave!
Mark. The Guards
Shall whip the rogue for his bold impudence,
And cast him from the castle gates. Let loose
The dogs upon him if he does not run,
And leave my walls as though they were on fire!
Away with him!
Ugrin (*in greatest haste and agitation*).
King Mark, oh good King Mark,
Behold, he is my brother in my kind,
A much abused and crazy fool who means
No evil with his foolish jests! See now
How pitiful his mien! He strove to make
Thee laugh in his poor way as I in mine.
Forgive the knave, and drive him not away
Into the darkness like a snarling cur
That whines about the house! He hungers, too,
For thou hast given him naught to eat or drink
Since he has been beneath thy kingly roof.
I am an old, old man, King Mark; he is
My brother, and a jester like myself;
I pity him! I pray thee let me keep
Him here with me until tomorrow's morn,

That he may sleep with me within my bed.
Then, when the sun shall shine upon his road,
He shall depart and seek a dwelling place.
'Twas thou thyself encouraged him to jest;
Judge then thy guilt and his with equal eye.
He is a fool, a crazy, blundering fool,
Yet drive him not away! I pray thee let
Him sleep beside me here a while that he
Refresh himself! He looks so pitifully!

MARK. Why, Ugrin, friend, 'tis new for thee to act
The part of charity!

UGRIN. I serve thee, Mark,
With foolishness and jests — and thou but knowest
Me by my services.

MARK. I still can make
One person glad tonight! Keep, then, thy fool
But thou stand'st surety for him if he should
Attempt to burn the castle or to do
Some other mischief in his madness.

[*The Knight lets the Strange Jester go; he crouches on the dais.*]

UGRIN. Mark,
Thou art indeed my dear, kind, cousin, still!
Good-night, fair cousin, go and sleep. Thou needst
It sorely — and — I pray that thou forget
Not my new wisdom!

MARK. Sirs, I wish you all
A restful night for this has been a day
Of many cares and many tribulations.
Tomorrow shall we bury this brave Knight
With all the honors due his noble rank,
For he was innocent.

GANELUN. Sleep well, King Mark!

1st Baron. May God watch o'er thee, Mark!

[*The Barons go up the stairs; the Knights and guards go out. The servants extinguish all but a few of the lights.*]

Mark (*on the stairs*). Come, Dinas, come
With me, and we will watch a little while.
My heart is sorrowful tonight!

Dinas (*following him up the stairs*). I'll stay
With thee until the morning break if thou
Desire it so.

Ugrin (*calling after them*). And cousins take good heed
Ye catch not cold!

[*They leave the stage, the moon shines through the grating, and the shadow of the bars falls into the hall. The Strange Jester crouches motionless.* Ugrin *turns to him.*]

Scene VI

Ugrin. Ay, so they are! "Whip, whip the fool!"
We wrack
Our weary brains to make a jest and then,
In payment, we are whipped if they so feel
Inclined! They treat us more like dogs than men!

[*He goes to the table where the food stands, and takes a bite.*]

Art hungry, brother? Wait, I'll bring my cloak,
For thou art cold.

[*He draws a cloak from under the stairs.*]

'Tis here, beneath the stairs,
I sleep.—A very kennel! 'Tis a shame.

[*He eats again.*]

Wilt thou not eat a morsel of what's left
Upon the table here? Nor drink a drop?
'Tis not forbidden, friend; our cousin lets

Us eat and drink of what is left.

[*He goes into the middle of the hall and bends down to look into the Strange Jester's face.*]

Art sad
Dear brother? Speak to me! Come, come, look not
So sorrowful!

[*Bending over the corpse of the dead Knight.*]

This man is colder still
Than thou! Art thou afraid? He'll not awake.

[*Comes close to the Strange Jester.*]

I'll wrap thee close within my cloak that thou
May'st sleep. Dost thou not wish to sleep? Why then
I'll sing a song to make thee sleep. Alas!
I know but joyous, silly songs! Come lay
Thee down.

[*He sits on the bench and draws the head upon his lap.*]

Thou look'st not happy, brother. Hast
A sorrow? Tell it me; here canst thou rest
At ease, and I will sing a song. Thou seemst
A child to whom one must sing songs to make
It sleep. I'll sing the song that Queen Iseult
Is wont to sing at even when she thinks
Of Tristram, her dear friend, sitting beside
Her open casement. 'Tis a pretty song.

[*With bowed head and closed eyes he hums very softly as if in his sleep. The body of the Strange Jester under the black cloak that covers it is shaken by sobs of anguish.*]

"Lord Tristram, my friend, is unfaithful,
And God's wrath on him shall descend;
Though cruelly he has betrayed me—"

ACT V

Same as Act IV.— The first glow of dawn shines through the grated door and windows, becoming brighter until the end of the Act. The Strange Jester sits cowering on the steps of the dais. BRANGAENE *comes hesitatingly down the steps; she carries an oil-lamp in her hand.*

SCENE I

BRANGAENE (*her voice is muffled by fear*).
Art thou still here, thou ghastly being? Ghost
Of awful midnight hours?
STR. JESTER. Brangaene I
Am here, and here I shall remain.
BRANGAENE (*looking for something on the ground*).
Methought
King Mark had paid thy jests with whips and had
Then driven thee away; and yet thou sitst
Here in the self-same place and starest still
With blear'd and fish-like eyes. Dost thou not know
That day is come? Fool, if thou hast a heart
Through which the warm blood flows, I pray thee go!
Go ere the Queen come down and see thee here!
Begone!
STR. JESTER. What seekest thou?
BRANGAENE. I seek the ring;
The ring that Queen Iseult let fall last night.
STR. JESTER. The ring is mine; I picked it up!
BRANGAENE (*angrily*). Iseult
Desires the ring!
STR. JESTER. I will not give it up!
BRANGAENE. The Queen will have thee hung unless thou give
The ring to her. She wants the ring!

STR. JESTER. Iseult
Received the ring; she cast my gift away,
As she threw me away. I'll keep it now.
But if she wishes it so earnestly
Let her then come and beg the ring of me.

BRANGAENE. Audacious knave! How vauntest thou thyself!
Give me the ring, and then begone, thou fool,
Ere Mark awake!

STR. JESTER. To Queen Iseult herself
I'll give the ring, and to none else. She shall
Not let me die in misery as she
Desires God may help her in her grief!

BRANGAENE (*going up the stairs*).
Thou fool, may God's damnation strike thee dead,
Thou and Lord Tristram for the night that's passed!
I'll bring thy words into the Queen that she
May have thee slain in secret by Gwain!

SCENE II

BRANGAENE *disappears above; the Strange Jester cowers motionless, his head buried in his hands. After a moment* ISEULT, *in a white night robe, comes down the stairs with* BRANGAENE. *She steps close in front of the Jester, who does not move.* BRANGAENE *remains on the lowest step, leaning against the post of the bannister.*

ISEULT. Thou gruesome fool, art thou some bird of prey,
Some wolf that comes to feed upon my soul?
Wilt thou not go? Why liest thou in wait
For me here in the dawning light like some
Wild beast that waits its quarry?

STR. JESTER (*looking up heavily*). Queen Iseult!
Oh dearest, fairest, sweetest one!

ISEULT. How dar'st
Thou call me by such names! My boiling blood
Turns cold and shudders! Go!

STR. JESTER (*groaning softly*). Where, lady, can
I find a sea whose endless depths are deep
Enough to drown my bitter misery?
Where? Tell me where, and I will go.

ISEULT. Go where
Thou wilt, so it be far away — so far
That the whole world shall sever thee and me,
And shall divide me from thy woe! My soul
Bleeds like an unheal'd wound when thou art near,
As though thou wert its murderer, and lo,
'Twill bleed to death from thy propinquity,
Thou fool! Hence, go, but give me first the ring
Thou stol'st last night and which in wanton jest
Thou torest from the hand of yon dead Knight.
It is Lord Tristram's ring.

STR. JESTER. Ay, Queen Iseult,
The ring is his — above all other things
He values it!

ISEULT. Give me the ring, else shalt
Thou die! I'll have thee slain, I swear, as sure
As I have suffered all this night such pangs
As suffered Mary at the cross of Christ.

STR. JESTER (*standing up*).
The ring is mine! I gave it yonder man
To cherish like his life.— He's died for thee
And me; — I gave him too my soul to guard
That by this ring he might compel and bring
Thee to me in the wood tonight. Oh, 'twas
An evil hour for us both, Iseult,

That Lord Denovalin rode through the wood
Today. Now, answer me, Iseult, wilt thou
Still keep the oath thou sware to Tristram once?

ISEULT (*fixedly*).
I'll break no oath that I have sworn, for God
Has sanctioned all my vows.

STR. JESTER. Then call I thee,
Iseult the Goldenhaired, in Tristram's name,
And by this ring. [*He hands her the ring.*]

ISEULT. Knowst thou that oath as well,
Thou ghost!
(*Solemnly.*)
Oh God, here in this hand, grown pale
And hot from resting on my heart all night,
I hold the ring of gold and emerald stone
By which I sware to Tristram to obey
His will, and come to him when one should call
Upon me by this ring and in his name!
Lo, thou hast called upon me; I obey!
What wishest thou of me, thou evil ghost
With hollow sunken eyes? What wouldst thou have,
Thou spectre of the twilight gloom?

STR. JESTER. I call
On thee, Iseult, my love, in my distress!
Oh know me now, who was thy lover once!

ISEULT. Thou suck'st my blood!

STR. JESTER. Thy blood was mine! Thy blood
Was once mine own! It was a crimson trust
Reposing in my knightly hands to keep
Irrevocably until Death. And where
Thou goest there go I; and where thou stayst
There stay I too. So spoke thy blood — I come
To claim but what is mine.

SEULT (*in great passion*). What have I done
To thee that thou recountest my past life
As 'twere a mocking song? Who art thou, fool?
Who art thou? Speak? I'm knocking at thy soul
As knocks a dead man's soul outside the gates
Of Paradise! Who art thou, fool? Art thou
Magician? Art thou ghost? Art thou some soul
Forever wandering for some evil deed?
Art thou some faithless lover barred from Heav'n
And Hell eternally, whose punishment
It is to wander restless through the world
Forever begging love from women's hearts?
Did God permit that thou shouldst know what none,
Save only Tristram and myself have known?
That thou shouldst taste of bitter torment still
By thinking thou art Tristram and shouldst thus
Make greater expiation for thy sins?

TR. JESTER. I am a faithless lover who has loved
Most faithfully, Iseult, belovèd one!

SEULT. Why criest thou my name unceasingly,
As scream enhungered owls, thou pallid fool?
Why starest thou at me with eyes that tears
And pain have rendered pitiless? I know
Naught of thy grief and am no leech to cure
Thy fool's disease!

TR. JESTER. Iseult!

SEULT (*in growing agitation*). Shall I shave off
My hair as thou hast done? Shall I too wear
A jester's parti-colored garb? Shall I
Go through the land, and howling in the streets

Bawl out Lord Tristram's name to make the throng
Of greasy knaves laugh? Speak? Is this the cure
Thou needest for thy grief? Does Tristram mock
Me through thy ribald wit? Does he revenge
Himself upon me thus because I loved
Him long before he saw Iseult, the Fair
Whitehanded Queen, and gave my soul and blood
To him? In scornful and in bitter words
Has he revealed our secret love to thee?
Has he betrayed me to his wife? Art thou
In league with her? Has her black spirit sent
Thee here to torture me by raising up
The phantom images of that past life
Which once I knew, but which is dead? Confess!
And! I will load thee down with precious gifts,
And daily pray for thee! I'll line thy way
With servants and I'll honor thee as though
Thou wert of royal blood where e'er thou art!
[*She falls on her knees.*]
Release my soul, thou fool, before I turn
A fool from very horror and from dread!

STR. JESTER (*raising her*).
Kneel not to me, Beloved One! Arise!

ISEULT (*remains a moment in his arms and then draws away shuddering*).
When Tristram called, the Heavens echoed back
A golden peal, as echoes through the land
The music of a golden bell; the world rejoiced
And from its depths sprang up sweet sounds of joy,

And with them danced my heart exultingly!
When Tristram stood beside me, all the air
Was wont to quiver with a secret bliss
That made the beasts move 'round uneasily.
The birds sang in the dead of night and so
Betrayed us! Say, who broke the bond that knit
Our kindred souls in one?

TR. JESTER. Lord Tristram broke
The bond and, faithless, took another wife!
Oh see, Iseult, how great the wrong he did
Us both!

EULT (*looking at him fixedly*).
I hear a raven's croak; I feel
The icy breath of some strange body when
Thou standest burning by my side, thou fool!
Thou pallid ghost!

TR. JESTER. Yet hast thou oft embraced
These limbs upon the journey o'er the wide
And purple sea along the starry way
Of our great happiness — just thou and I,
Alone in blissful loneliness! And thou
Hast often listened to this voice when it,
In the deep forest, called the nightingales,
Alluring them to sing above thy head,
And like them whispered in thine ears
Soft words that made a wave of passion flow,
Sweet and voluptuous, through thy burning veins!
Iseult, shall I repeat those words? Wilt thou
Again go wandering through the world
With singing blood that makes our hearts beat high
In perfect unison of love, with souls that dream
In silent happiness?

ISEULT. Lord Tristram's steps
Beside me made my blood soar heavenward
And bore me up until the earth bowed down,
And bent beneath our feet like surging waves,
And carried us like lofty ships that sail
To victory!

STR. JESTER. Ay, Ay, Iseult, 'Twas so we walked!
Iseult, art thou still mindful of the day
When, hawk on fist, we galloped o'er the downs,
For Mark was with Lord Dinas on that day?
Dost thou remember how I lifted thee
From thy good steed and placed thee on mine own,
And held thee close embraced, while thou didst cling
To me like some fond child.

ISEULT. And Tristram, bold
In the intoxication of his love,
Let go the reins, and gave his horse the spurs,
Till, like an arrow in full flight, it clove
The golden air and bore us heavenward!
How often have I dreamed of that wild ride.
And now with Isot of the Fair White Hands
He rides, as formerly with me—!

STR. JESTER. And shall
I sing to thee, Iseult the Goldenhaired,
The lay of that White-handed wife who sits
And grieves by day and night? It is the sad
And sombre song of my great guilt. Her eyes
Are red from weeping—!

ISEULT. Ay, and mine are red
From weeping too! Fool, Fool, why mock'st thou me?
But since thou knowst so much of Tristram, tell
Me this; why did Lord Tristram marry her—,
This Isot of the Fair White Hands?

R. JESTER (*slowly and painfully*). There plays
About her mouth a silver smile; this smile
Enchanted him one lonely night. But, when,
At cold gray dawn, he heard her called Iseult
He nigh went mad with sorrow and with joy
From thinking of the real Iseult — of her,
The Goldenhaired — the beautiful, about
Whose mouth there plays a golden smile.
Then, sick
At heart, and weary of this life, he wished
To die, until his sorrow drove him here,
To Cornwall, once again to see his love
Before he died and, face to face stand once
Again with her! — The rest thou knowest well.

ULT (*angrily*).
Ay, fool, I know the rest, and I know too
That for these black and loathsome lies of
thine
There's one reward! — And that is death!
I'll put
An end to my great suffering! If thou
Art Tristram thou shalt live, and, in mine
arms,
That yearn for Tristram, thou shalt find a hot
And passionate forgetfulness of cool
And silver smiles thou fledest from! If thou
Hast lied no longer shalt thou dream at night
Of golden and of silver smiles!
(*To* BRANGAENE.)
Go fetch
The key, Brangaene, of the upper cell!

ANGAENE (*horrified*).
Iseult, what wouldst thou do?

ULT. Obey me, girl!
Now listen, spectre, to my words. There lives
Within these walls a hound who has become
A wild and raging beast from his great love

For Tristram, once his master. Fool, this dog
Is full as savage as a fierce white wolf
That lusts for human flesh; his food is thrust
Into his cage on sticks. Since Tristram left,
The beast has slain three keepers. Fool, what think'st
Thou of this hound? Would he attack and tear
Lord Tristram like a wolf should Tristram chance
To step within his cage?

STR. JESTER (*rising, tall, determined, and noble*).
Oh Queen Iseult—!
Oh Queen Iseult—! Old Husdent ever was
My faithful hound—. Let me go to him now.

ISEULT (*starting back*).
Thou knowst his name—!

STR. JESTER. Brangaene, lead the fool.
Obey thy mistress's command. Thou needst
Not lead me to the cage! I know the way.
Give me the key!

[*He snatches the key from* BRANGAENE'S *hand and disappears with long strides behind the stairs. He is erect and proud. The two women stand looking at each other amazed and motionless.*]

SCENE III

BRANGAENE. Poor fool, I pity him!

ISEULT (*breaking out passionately*).
He must not go! My God, he must not! Call
Him back, Brangaene, call him back!

THE VOICE OF THE JESTER (*joyfully*). Husdent!

BRANGAENE. Oh, hark!

ISEULT (*in increasing fear*).
His cry! His dying cry, perhaps!
Brangaene, dearest sister, what thinkst thou
Of this Strange Jester Tramtris?

[*The women stare at each other without speaking.*]

Wilt thou go
And look between the bars?

[BRANGAENE *goes after the Strange Jester.*]

Oh Thou who hast
Created this great world, why didst Thou then
Create me, too?

BRANGAENE (*reëntering in great excitement*).

Iseult! Oh God, Iseult!
Old Husdent's cage is empty, and the fool
With Husdent leapt the wall and they are gone! [*She hastens to the window.*]

ISEULT. Has he then slain the dog and fled away?

BRANGAENE. Behold! There goes the fool, and Husdent jumps
And dances round him as he walks and, mad
With joy, leaps howling up and licks his face
And hands!

ISEULT (*jumps on to the bench before the window and waves her hand joyously*).

Oh Tristram, Tristram, thou dear fool!
My dear belovèd friend!—He does not turn!
—Oh call! Oh call him back!—Run! Run! Make haste
To follow him and bring him back! He does
Not hear my voice!

BRANGAENE (*shaking the bars of the gate*).

The gate! my God, the gate!
The guards are still asleep!

ISEULT. Oh God! I die!
Oh Tristram! Tristram! Tristram! See, he turns
Not back! God is unkind, He loves me not.
I'll bathe thy feet with tears and dry them then
With burning kisses! Tristram! Tramtris, come!

Belovèd fool, turn back! He goes! He's gone!
See how the sun shines on his jester's garb,
And makes his red cloak gleam! How grand, how tall
He is! See! Tristram goes back to the world
Forever now!

[*She raises herself to her full height—fixedly.*]

My friend, Brangaene, my
Belovèd friend was here!

[*She sinks back into* BRANGAENE'S *arms.*]

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